

LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY ON MEN GROWING UP TO BE BOYS

MARCH 2006

IN THESE TIMES

FORMER NSA DIRECTOR
WILLIAM ODOM ON IRAQ

IS GAY HOW THE EASTER
BUNNY ROLLS?

FORGET D.C. THE BATTLE IS IN THE STATES

BY DAVID SIROTA AND NATHAN NEWMAN

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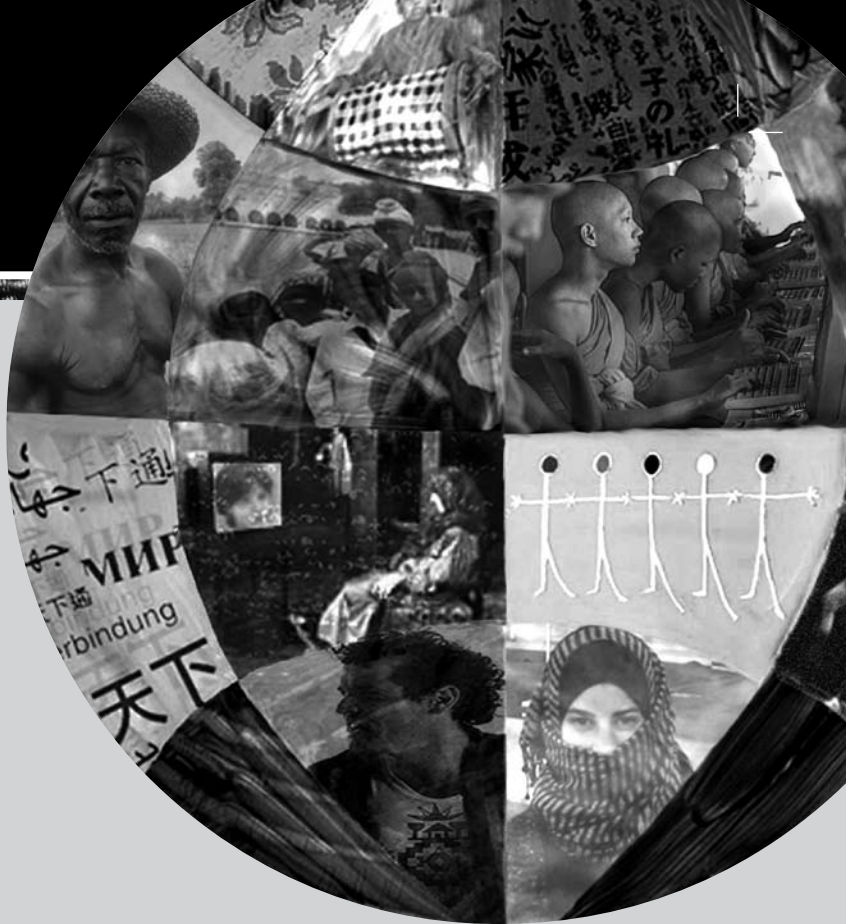
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Black Leadership Wanted

HISTORIC EVENTS HAVE a way of burning off the mists. Coretta Scott King's Feb. 7 funeral surfaced age-old political rip tides. The Republican establishment ignored Martin Luther King, Jr.'s funeral. This time around, they tried to make political amends by showing up at his wife's ceremony.

They brought along their characteristic hypocrisy. In his tribute, George H.W. Bush waxed, "I respected Coretta, like her husband, because they rejected race-baiting by those who opposed, as well as those who supported, the civil rights movement." Some chutzpah from the man who made Willie Horton a household name.

A chorus of right wingers has since railed at the "politicization" of Mrs. King's last rites. "Political grandstanding at a funeral erodes the dignity of the occasion," sniffed Fox-TV talk king Bill O'Reilly. Those, however, who carp about the political hijacking of King's homecoming should rewind to the 2004 canonization—er, funeral—of Ronald Reagan. The political pageantry of that event left Democrats gasping for oxygen.

Listen up, girls and boys: The civil rights movement boasts a long and esteemed history of using assassinations, murders and funerals toward political ends. Mrs. King was a singularly fervent anti-war crusader who abhorred W's war.

The funeral also showed that the South can rise again. The civil rights movement of the '60s was born in the South, and dominated by southerners like the Kings, but 50 years later its best-known stalwarts are based in the North. Today's posse is led by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., Rev. Al Sharpton, Minister Louis Farrakhan and Sen. Barack Obama.

It was no accident at this Georgia funeral that among three dozen speakers, not one was a black civil rights activist from the upside of the Mason-Dixon line.

Rarely at a major civil rights event does one find Jesse Jackson, Sr. sitting on his hands in the front row. Movement insiders know that bad blood has long

boiled between Jackson and the Kings. Yet even the veterans were agape when "Rev" was muzzled at the funeral.

Another northerner, entertainer Harry Belafonte, wasn't even at the service. He was close to the Kings, and was at Coretta's side at her husband's funeral. King watchers opine that Belafonte was "disinvited" from her ceremony for fear that he would antagonize President George W. Bush, a charge the family denies. Belafonte had delivered a scorching critique of the Bush presidency days before the funeral, calling Bush "the greatest terrorist in the world."

This North/South leadership divide remains both a source of tension and weakness. African Americans need to get it together. After all, what kind of black leadership allows a white man to scold the African-American elite about its obligation to black history? When former President Bill Clinton took his turn at the funeral dais, he was greeted with roaring applause from the audience, then proceeded to admonish the crowd: "What's your responsibility for the future of the King Center?" Clinton noted, and rightly so, that "there's more rich black folks in this county than anyone in America except Montgomery County, Maryland."

It's about more than money. The recent deaths of Mrs. King, Ossie Davis, Constance Baker Motley, C. Delores Tucker and Rosa Parks have left a yawning void. A new poll from the Associated Press and AOL Black Voices asked African Americans to name the nation's "most important black leader." Jackson led the field with 15 percent of those surveyed, followed by Republicans Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell. Only 18 percent of those polled said that African-American leaders were doing a "very effective job."

Most intriguing, however, was the silence. About one-third of respondents declined to offer up a name.

The mists may have cleared, but a gloomy picture emerges. Black political leadership is faltering.

—Laura S. Washington

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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mixed reaction

QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

Though Lester Crawford had a controversial three-year stint at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), his last two months were spent as its head, before he abruptly resigned in September. Highlights of Crawford's FDA tenure include defending the agency's lax regulation of the arthritis medication Vioxx—high doses of which were found to triple the risks of heart attacks and sudden cardiac death—as well as intimidating the FDA reviewer who first called attention to the drug's deadly side effects.

THE QUO:

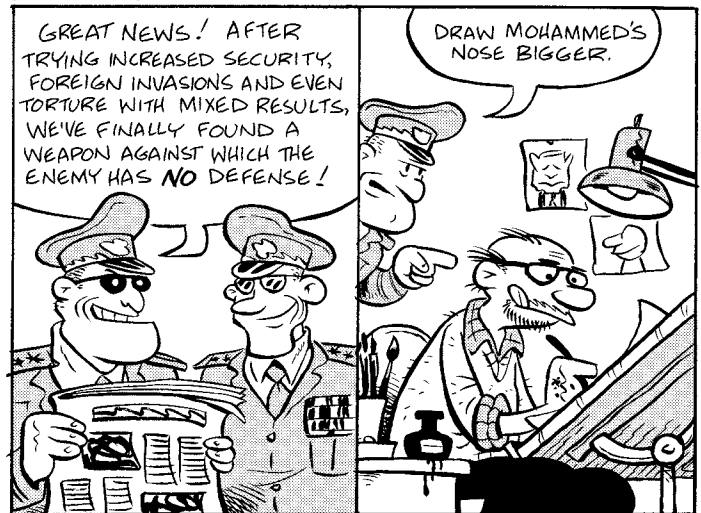
In January, Crawford accepted a job as "senior counsel" at Policy Directions, a lobbying firm that represents the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) and Merck & Co. Inc.

Merck, you may recall, is the company that brought you Vioxx.

“ If you want to know what God thinks of money, just look at the people he gave it to. ”

DOROTHY PARKER

BY TERRY LABAN



the lexicon

step up to the plate: v. (stepping, stepped)

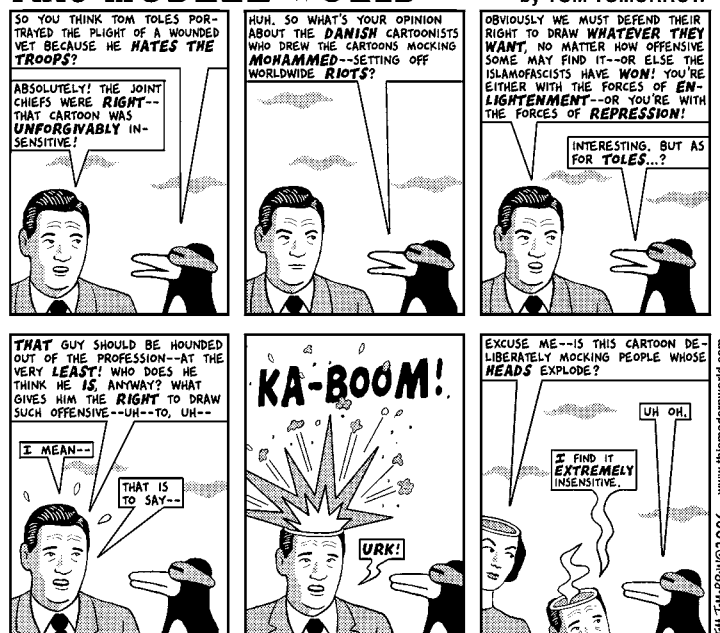
TRADITIONAL USAGE: To confront an upcoming challenge directly, without hesitation.

CURRENT USAGE: To brace for public backlash by placing full-page advertisements in major newspapers. Ads by Exxon Mobil insisted that its profit margins were low compared to other industries. And yet, they raked in fourth-quarter profits of \$10.7 billion—\$1,361 per second. "While most companies would be proud to trumpet record profits, Exxon Mobil did everything it could to play down the news," the *New York Times* reported.

"Stepping up to the plate means having the courage and wisdom to face the realities of the energy market," former Exxon Mobil CEO Lee R. Raymond told the Energy Policy Foundation of Norway last year, "and being willing to tell the public about those realities in a forthright way."

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



letters



Democratic Discourse

Lakshmi Chaudhry's cover story last month on blogs and the importance of diversity in progressive politics provoked a range of responses from progressive Web sites. Here's a short selection of the comments from progressive blogs and message boards:

Pandagon (pandagon.net):

The fact that Markos can't differentiate between meritocracy and democracy certainly explains a heck of a lot.

Bob Fertik, Democrats.com (www.democrats.com):

[T]he "inner circle" thinks the progressive blogosphere begins and ends with themselves. When Kos gave up on a filibuster and others in the "inner circle" followed his lead, they were shocked to discover "outsiders" like us leading an impressive netroots charge.

Pam Spaulding (pamspaulding.com):

No one is saying the "Big Dog network" is inherently evil (though I'm sure some out there feel that way). ... It's common sense that one would link to peers, but to say

there is no passive resistance to acknowledge, seek out or promote new political voices from a perspective that is not white or male or straight is just silly. I'd rather spend my time fighting the Right (and the Dem wannabe-Right), but seeing this kind of stuff continually come up just reeks. It can't be ignored.

Bitchlab (blog.pulpculture.org):

[W]e're talking about substantive democracy, something other than mere procedural democracy here. Kos rode the crest of a desire for that, a desire for substantive voice in the public sphere, in civil society. By not fostering that, by not generously giving back to the very community that made him, then he is doing nothing more than ... acting just like the privileged few who excluded him and thwarted his dreams.

[A] hierarchical system has been forged, complete with justifications about natural deservingness that ring hollow to anyone familiar with the vicissitudes of oppression and injustice.

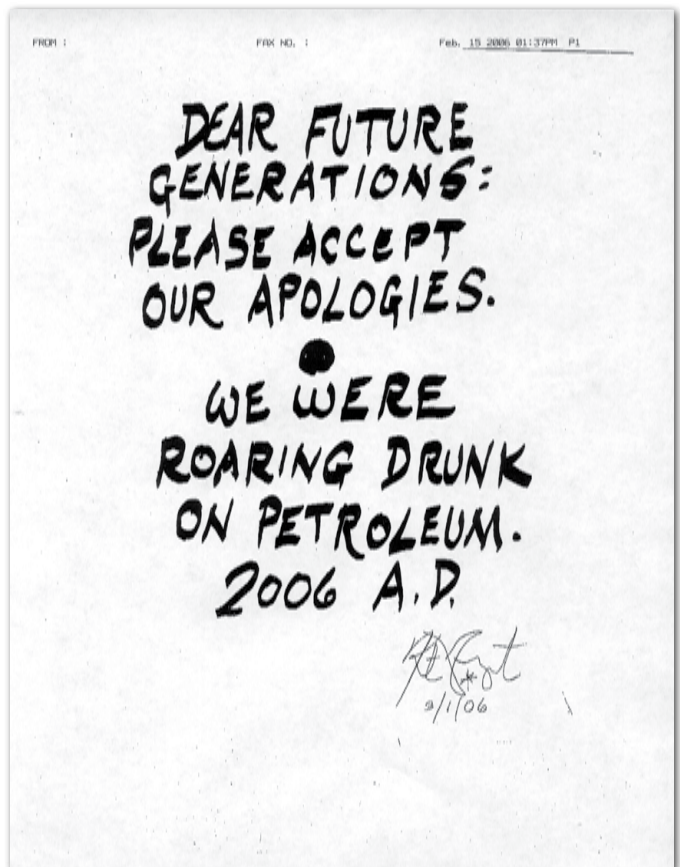
Deconstructing Reconstruction

Silja Talvi's January cover story, "Cult of Character," is simply superb, and I want to thank her for writing it, and *In These Times* and The Nation Institute for supporting that ever-rarer creature: progressive investigative journalism.

As someone who grew up mostly in Tulsa, Oklahoma, under the pervasive yoke of Christian Reconstructionist ideology, I was thrilled to see light being shone on

So Very Sorry

Senior Editor Kurt Vonnegut faxes his word art our way every once in a while. Below is one of his latest contributions to enliven the office.



the clear and present danger posed by creeping theocracy in the United States. Since R.J. Rushdoony articulated most major facets of Christian Reconstructionist ideology and strategy for taking over government institutions in his book, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, in 1973, pluralism has retreated in the face of this religiously-justified intolerance. We badly need this piece, and many more (in tandem with organized long-term action). More, please!

Brian Awehali
Oakland, Calif.

CORRECTION

"Can Blogs Revolutionize Progressive Politics" (February) stated that no candidate backed by the most popular progressive blogs has yet won an election.

Markos "Kos" Moulitsas wrote in to refute this: "Reps. Ben Chandler and Stephanie Herseth both won elections after being backed by the most popular progressive blogs."

Dear Readers:

We're pleased to announce the addition of two new senior editors to our masthead: Laura S. Washington and Terry J. Allen.

Washington, who wrote this month's editorial, will be contributing a column starting in April. Washington, who was deputy press secretary to the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, is the Ida B. Wells-Barnet Professor at DePaul University, an op-ed columnist for the Chicago *Sun-Times* and a regular NPR commentator.

Allen writes our "Health and Science" column (pg. 45). Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *Salon.com*, *New Scientist* and *The American Prospect*. She has reported from Central America, Iraq and Asia and was editor of Amnesty International's magazine.

Senior editors play a key role at *In These Times*, contributing to the magazine and the Web site (www.inthesetimes.com) and bringing us insights from their own activism. Here are some projects that other senior editors are currently working on:

- David Sirota's new book, *Hostile Takeover*, is due out in May from Crown Publishing.
- Lakshmi Chaudhry will be speaking in New York on March 2 at a panel hosted by Demos titled "The Republic of Blogs: New Media and Democracy."
- Christopher Hayes has been conducting media trainings for college activists around the country through Campus Progress.

Not to mention Senior Editor Kurt Vonnegut, who regularly drops us wisdom via fax. His latest appears on the letters page.

Please continue to support their work and ours by subscribing and donating to the magazine.

In solidarity,



Joel Bleifuss
Editor

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Reps. Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey give us the "Progressive State of the Union"

Lakshmi Chaudhry dissects the sexualization of our geriatric years in Gail Sheehy's new book *Sex and the Seasoned Woman*

Christopher Hayes interviews historian Karen Sawislak on parallels between Katrina and the Chicago Fire of 1871



FIRE ON THE PRAIRIE

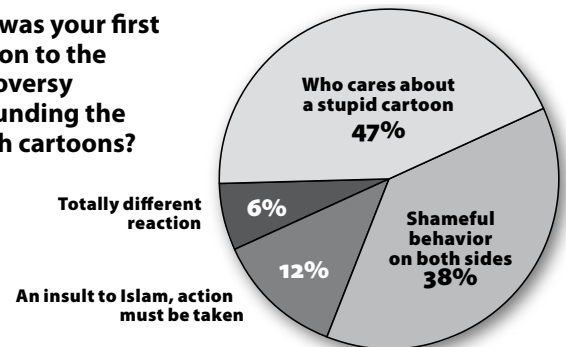
a radio forum sponsored by *In These Times*

Aaron Sarver interviews poet Kevin Coval, whose first book is *Slingshots: A Hip-Hop Poetica*.

Also, Phoebe Connelly interviews Christina Page, author of *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America*.

To hear the show visit: fireontheprairie.com

What was your first reaction to the controversy surrounding the Danish cartoons?



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Globesity en Español

Latin America fights the battle of the bulge

BY KELLY HEARN

LIKE HER FRIENDS FROM Mexico to Chile, the girl from Ipanema is getting too big for her britches. Latin America has fallen prey to the “globesity” trend, adding to the ranks of the one billion people the World Health Organization (WHO) says are overweight around the world. Globalization, with its accompanying sedentary lifestyles and proliferation of fast-food conglomerates, is a major culprit. As a 2001 study by Ricardo Uauy, a researcher at the University of Chile’s Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology, noted, “as income increases in transitional countries, so does the consumption of high fat foods, including industrially processed hydrogenated fats.” Globesity’s spread is bad news for struggling countries with stressed health systems that will have to tend to fat’s future fallout, from diabetes to heart problems.

Policymakers’ responses have been mixed, from introducing legislation to criticizing global corporations to deny-

ing the problem altogether.

Mexico has adopted national legislation to fight the problem. In figure-obsessed Argentina, where 30 percent of the population is estimated to be dieting on any given day, an obesity law is awaiting a Senate vote. But fat’s real Latin American enemy appears to be Chile.

With strong trade ties to the United States, Chile has logged South America’s most sustained growth in recent years. And it’s not just mirroring Washington’s preference for trade liberalization, open markets and tax policy, but Americans’ expanding figure as well: The Center for Family and Community Health at UC Berkeley predicts that 9 million Chileans will be obese by 2010.

Politicians like Chilean Congressman Fulvio Rossi are lashing back at bulge. In tandem with a decade-long anti-obesity program started in 2000 by the Chilean government, he has proposed a junk food tax and measures to give school kids more time for physical activity. He is

also targeting *la comida chatarra*, or junk food. In a February 8 interview with a leading Chilean newspaper, Rossi lashed out at McDonald’s new nutritional guidelines.

“Unfortunately, McDonald’s is engaging in false advertising,” Rossi said. “They are saying in their nutritional information that the caloric requirements of minors are larger than what they really are to justify the consumption of hamburgers.”

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics also caused a stir last year by reporting that just over 40 percent of adult Brazilians are overweight, and that one in 10 adults is obese. Against a backdrop of globalization this news may not be all that surprising: Carlos Augusto Monteiro, a nutritionist at the University of São Paulo, has reported that soft drink consumption in that country has shot up 400 percent in the last 30 years. Demographic shifts mean more sedentary lifestyles for more Brazilians; between 1940 and 2000, the country’s population, now 175 million, went from being 80 percent rural and 20 percent urban to 80 percent urban and 20 percent rural.

So what is the corrective?

Laws mandating public education are designed to teach the newly globalized how to eat well and resist sedentary ways. But obesity can be a complicated political football. Last January, for example, Brazil’s President Lula da Silva dismissed obesity figures because he draws political clout from a public battle against poverty and food insecurity. According to a *New York Times* article, da Silva claimed that the study was likely skewed because the subjects did not report accurately. “Hunger isn’t something to be measured by research,” da Silva said. “Not everyone wants to recognize that they are going hungry. They are ashamed.”

Another worrisome trend is that policy types in Latin America, just like their counterparts in the United States, may be relying too much on information generated by the very industries causing the obesity problem.

That issue came sharply into focus in early February when the Associated Press and other outlets reported that the

WHO had blocked an influential, corporate-backed science group from participating in setting food and water quality standards.

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) is a rising player in some of Latin America's obesity battles. In Brazil, Chile and Mexico, ILSI is launching the Healthy Lifestyles, Healthy People (HLHP) project, a campaign to fund scientists trying to tackle the problem. The group is working with the Pan American Health Organization, the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ILSI says the goal is to build "sound obesity prevention" in Latin America by 2007 through encouraging good diets and exercise.

The problem, say critics, is that ILSI represents the kings of *chatarra*, with a roster of corporate associates including Coca-Cola, General Mills, Hershey Foods, Kellogg, Kraft, McDonald's, Nestle and PepsiCo.

Such links are the target of ILSI critics. In December, the Washington-based Natural Resources Defense Council, along with more than a dozen other U.S.-based NGOs, cited ILSI's financial conflicts of interest as a reason for the WHO to break its ties with the group.

As ILSI gears up to fight obesity in Latin America, they say that the institute has been wielding undue influence over the WHO by presenting suspect scientific data on topics from tobacco to water quality issues—data that is eventually used to calibrate health standards.

ILSI's detractors point to an illustrative case: In 1998, ILSI co-funded a WHO-UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report on nutrition and carbohydrates. The ILSI-backed study concluded that there was no direct link between sugar consumption and obesity, and advised there be no upper limit set for amounts of sugar in the diet.

Limiting ILSI's influence "is an extremely important decision by the World Health Organization," says Jennifer Sass, of the National Resource Defense Council. "We hope that this new decision will prevent direct collaborations between ILSI and WHO that shut out other perspectives and participants."

The victory is a mixed one: The WHO's February statement still recognized ILSI as a working partner in good standing but specified that it can play no role in standards setting. Suzanne Harris, ILSI's executive director, says she doesn't understand why the decision has gotten at-

tention because it has changed nothing.

"ILSI has not been involved in standard-setting exercises recently, and perhaps never," Harris says. She added that in the case of the sugar report, the institute "was charged with reviewing the available data and making recommendations" to groups who could set standards, but she stressed that "ILSI was not involved in that activity."

"The WHO has a long history with ILSI manipulations and maneuverings, some of which I witnessed," says Marion Nestle, a professor at New York University and author of *Food Politics*. "It is understandably impatient with an organization that pretends to be independent, but is owned and operated by food companies."

Kathryn L. Mulvey, executive director of Corporate Accountability International, a U.S.-based nonprofit group, plans to keep the pressure on. "Vigilance by governments and NGOs will be required to enforce ILSI's new exclusion from collaboration with WHO on normative and standards work," she says. ■

KELLY HEARN is a writer based in the United States and South America. He is a former UPI staff reporter and the recipient of the 2006 Samuel Chavkin Grant for Investigative Journalism.



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MARK WILLSON/GETTY IMAGES

Which came first: the controversy or the egg?

An Anti-Gay Easter

WHOSE CHILDREN WILL be allowed to participate in the White House's annual Easter Egg Roll on April 17? Not the sons and daughters of gay parents, if the Christian right gets its way.

In November, when the Family Pride Coalition, a D.C.-based gay rights advocacy group, invited its members to participate in one of the "great traditions of our country" the religious right sprang into action. The Institute on Religion and Democracy, a religious think tank, accused the Family Pride Coalition of trying to "exploit a children's event for political purposes." Even the White House has weighed in.

"Will the president take any measures to prevent these activists from using this non-political event as a way to push their agenda on the rest of us?" asked a pool reporter (not Jeff Gannon). White House spokesman Scott McClellan responded, "We'll talk about it as we get closer. I've seen a couple of reports about it; I don't know how extensive that reporting has been. But this has been a family event for a long time and the president always looks forward to this event."

Jennifer Chrisler, Family Pride executive director, defended the coalition's organizing effort this way: "Approximately 9 million children are being raised in LGBT-headed households. We strive like every other parent in this country to give our children the best opportunities, to shower them with love, to teach them respect and a love for the rich and diverse traditions America has to offer them."

The Family Pride Coalition plans to is-

sue T-shirts to egg-rollers that bear a "non-political message," such as "Love Makes a Family." But in light of the U.S. Capitol police dragging Cindy Sheehan out of the House of Representatives gallery before the President's State of the Union speech in January, wearing a T-shirt these days might be a bit too extreme.

For gay parents and their children, simply going out in public as a family could be considered political in most communities across the United States. Gay parents holding hands at the White House Easter Egg Roll would be considered by many an aggressive statement. Why? The anti-gay movement is threatened by people who are visibly gay, because that leads to normalization and a relaxing of stigmas.

The Christian right blogosphere is afire, condemning the presence of gay parents on the White House lawn as "nearly terrorist threats from the homo lobby." One post suggests that "White House psychologists" should be deployed to help the children of gay parents and implies that they are molested in their homes. Another wishes the gays "good luck," reminding readers that "the Secret Service carries automatic weapons."

Such posts are, of course, "those of the

individual posters" to www.FreeRepublic.com, "and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of ... its operators." The site claims 200,000 registered members, known as "Freepers," and a daily readership of "tens of thousands." Free Republic, founded in 1996, has been embraced by right-wing social conservatives as the online water cooler for "patriots" who are "biased toward God, country, family, liberty and freedom."

Or at least liberty and freedom for some. "These lowlife scum should just be mowed down like terrorists," writes one good Christian.

With 16,000 tickets issued for last year's event, the Easter Egg Roll is the White House's largest public celebration.

Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president to invite children to spend the morning playing Easter games on the White House lawn. Since 1878, First Ladies have added personal touches. Lou Hoover added Maypole dances. Eleanor Roosevelt greeted the nation via radio from the event in 1933. Pat Nixon introduced the tradition of a White House staffer dressing up as the Easter Bunny. It was under her watch that spoons used in the egg roll race were borrowed from

act now



SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY

Out of the muck of post-Katrina New Orleans surfaced the Common Ground Collective, established to provide short-term relief and long-term support to the despoiled Gulf Coast region. Three volunteers started the group in the first week after the hurricane hit with \$50; the collective now plugs 700 health care workers, skilled laborers and housing rights advocates into ravaged low-income communities. Under the banner "Solidarity Not Charity," Common Ground works "to ensure that historically neglected communities are able to come back together for a more just and sustainable future." Learn about Common Ground's initiatives at commongroundrelief.org.

the White House kitchen.

This is not the first time the Egg Roll has seen controversy. In 1954, Mamie Eisenhower allowed African-American parents and their children on the White House lawn for the first time. She did not consider the decision political, but for many white citizens, the only blacks they wanted to see on the White House lawn were gardeners.

Today, some conservative bloggers have suggested that President George W. Bush cancel the event or “de-gay” it by restricting attendance to military families, as he did in 2003.

Often called “the people’s house,” the White House is the ultimate site for the ideals of our government, the legacy of our struggle for independence and liberty. If gay families are not equally welcome there, the message will resonate far beyond its walls.

—John Ireland

John Ireland lives with his partner and son in Los Angeles. If they are able to attend the White House Egg Roll in April, they will do so as a family.

The Gulf Rush

WHILE PRESIDENT BUSH was making a post-Katrina “show” landing in New Orleans on January 12, declaring it a “heck of a place to bring your family,” Tomas Aguilar was trying to absorb the hell of a situation faced by thousands of immigrant workers.

Not far from where the president spoke, Aguilar had seen immigrants working 12-hour days and living in their cars and on bedrolls under bridges. On top of that, they were getting stiffed on pay.

“When I landed at the airport, I overheard two people talking who saw the hurricane as an opportunity. They were disaster entrepreneurs,” says Aguilar. “Then I get to the city, and it’s crazy.”

In December and January, Aguilar traveled throughout the Gulf Coast on an assignment from the Equal Justice Center in Austin, Texas, to make recommendations on worker needs and resources. He saw workers living in tents in a New Orleans city park, for which they were charged \$300 a month. They cooked over an open fire and bathed from a bucket, unless they could afford the \$5 fee for a shower in a nearby trailer. Others were sleeping three-high

in bunk beds in a mold-encrusted hotel near Canal Street in downtown New Orleans.

“It’s a hierarchy and these workers are at the very bottom. And there is no one to help them,” says Aguilar.

At 5 a.m., Aguilar waited with workers who converge on designated street corners, waiting for contractors to drive them to the day’s assignments. He saw laborers tearing out mold-infested sheetrock, unprotected with the Tyvek suits that health groups recommend, and scaling roofs without safety equipment. And everyone, both workers and advocates, complain of the “Katrina cough,” a cold-like feeling that can’t be shaken. Aguilar has documented his visit on a Web site (<http://flickr.com/photos/campano>).

“Some contractors are paying people. But for every worker who is being treated well, there are 25 who are not. It’s like the Wild West,” he says.

“Wild West” is a term repeatedly used by worker advocates, but a more apt comparison might be the “Gulf Rush.” Companies are cashing in on the nation’s largest natural disaster while taking advantage of vulnerable work forces.

Of course, workforce abuse is not new. Katrina has only magnified it, with a little help from the Bush administration. Taxpayers for Common Sense and the Hurricane Law Blog (www.hurricanelawblog.com)—set up by a Louisiana law firm—are tracking companies getting the billions of dollars in no-bid contracts from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is under its aegis.

KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton, and Bechtel have billion dollar contracts; ECC from California has a \$500 million contract; and the Shaw Group, a client of Bush’s former FEMA director Joe Allbaugh, got two \$100 million contracts.

In September, eight representatives, led by Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), asked the independent Government Accountability Office to set up a special team of experienced auditors. Comptroller General David M. Walker declined, establishing instead a review of emergency systems for contracting. Allegations of contractor abuse—\$85 billion has been spent on Katrina recovery so far—are being investigated by the Inspector General of the Department of

Homeland Security, says DHS spokesperson Marta Metelko, although she could not say how many investigations are underway, of whom, for what abuses or when they will be complete.

But from the view in the bayou, nothing is happening. Corporations with government contracts hide behind layers of invisibility, hiring subcontractors who hire other subcontractors—a frayed rope ladder reaching down to the workers. While FEMA pays \$24 a cubic yard on a contract for debris cleanup to the contract holder, workers get \$4 a yard—if they get paid at all.



Workers crowd around a car in downtown New Orleans in hopes of being selected for a job.

Bill Chandler, president of the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, describes immigrants abandoned without food at trailer parks. Some subcontractors, he says, have hired immigrant workers and, instead of paying them, called the Immigration Enforcement Unit, which arrests them.

“It’s a very loose and a very dishonest system,” he says.

Workers are being recruited from throughout the country. Most are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Brazil, according to Mary Bauer, director of the Immigrant Justice Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama. She estimates that there are at least 100,000 now working in the Gulf region.

Bauer called together advocates to discuss immigrant worker issues in New Orleans, a city that Mayor Ray Na-

gin said is being “overrun” by Mexicans. Local lawyers are overwhelmed, says Luz Molina, a clinical law professor at Loyola University School of Law. For months, Molina was the sole volunteer attorney onsite at a pro bono call center handling floods of Katrina-related problems, from evictions to bulldozing.

With so little infrastructure and so few advocates, “anything goes,” according to Sally Bevell, a minister in the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church working on disaster relief and recovery and Hispanic concerns.

“The truth of it is—and a lot of people don’t want to talk about the truth—many of the workers are undocumented,” says Bevell. “I spoke with three different groups of people who did the blue tarps for FEMA, and they didn’t get paid,” she says, of roofing workers. “The subcontractors pick up and move on.”

Chandler tried filing unpaid wage claims with the Gulfport Office of the U.S. Department of Labor, wage and hour division. But the office has only two employees for the entire region. Of nine filings, only one is being actively pursued, says Chandler. “There is no one here to enforce the law.”

In fact, the sole court action is in Maryland. CASA of Maryland, a Latino advocacy group, filed a lawsuit in late December on behalf of 35 local workers who were recruited for Katrina clean-up, many of whom were paid with checks that bounced. They are seeking \$99,105 in wages and overtime from the subcontractor. Litigation would not be needed if safeguards were in place, says Steve Smitson, director of legal services for CASA, which aids immigrant workers. “Employers could be required to register. They could post wage bonds,” says Smitson.

The office of Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) agrees that labor laws need to be enforced and that “there are still a lot of worker rights issues that need to be resolved,” according to Brian Richardson, her spokesperson. “But,” he says, “our first priority is to help Louisiana workers, to make sure that they get their fair share.”

While contractors are walking on Big Easy street, the workers are still sleeping under bridges. “It’s frustrating,” says the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Bauer. “We’re doing national reconstruction on the backs of vulnerable workers.”

—Cynthia L. Cooper

Victory in the Medicare Drug War?

IN 2000, BOTH George Bush and Al Gore promised a Medicare drug benefit if they got elected. Millions of seniors were having difficulty paying for their drugs, the cost of which was growing at the rate of 10 percent a year. Seniors finally saw this campaign promise become a reality at the beginning of 2006, as President Bush’s Medicare drug benefit, passed by Congress in November 2003, came into effect. It is probably not quite what they had in mind.

As it is currently structured, the benefit requires seniors to navigate their way through dozens of competing insurance plans, each of which has different options concerning co-pays, deductibles, premiums, the range of drugs covered and the prices charged for each drug. The choice of plans is further complicated by the fact that insurance companies can change the prices charged for drugs, even though seniors are tied to their plan for most of the year.

In addition to being complicated, the

appall-o-meter

0.6 Spinning Hamas

Shortly before the recent Palestinian elections, Hamas figured its image could use some warm-’n’-fuzzification. So, reports the *Guardian*, the party’s Al Aqsa Television station announced it was going to play down “the tanks, the guns, the killing and the blood.” It introduced more talk shows, talent contests and a kiddie show featuring kindly “Uncle Hazim.”

The party also hired Nahat Aqtash, a Birzeit University media professor, as an image consultant. According to the *Guardian*, Aqtash advised Hamas muckety-mucks to nix their Jew-baiting, talk of destroying Israel and general celebration of killing. He also counseled Muhammad Abu Tir, a highly placed deputy, to stop coloring his beard red with henna. Sends the wrong message.

3.4 Oh, Bondage

Defense attorneys may be the heroes of the courtroom, but prosecutors try harder. Consider Massachusetts prosecutor Robert Nelson, who tried everything short of snapping on a pair of nipple clamps in court to put away a dominatrix

for manslaughter.

Nelson was trying to convince a jury that 56-year-old Barbara Asher (*nom de guerre* “Mistress Lauren M”) had inadvertently killed a customer and then dismembered and disposed of his remains. The unfortunate patron allegedly died of a heart attack while hanging from Asher’s replica of a medieval rack. His remains haven’t been found.

In closing arguments, Nelson staged a gripping reenactment of the crime, reports the AP, while wearing a black leather bondage mask. Raising both hands and clutching a blackboard, as if on the rack himself, the prosecutor poignantly rendered the victim’s final moments, then let his head slump as if dead.

The defense objected. “That’s enough, Mr. Nelson,” the judge agreed. “Thank you for your demonstration.” Mistress M was cleared of the charges.

5.2 The House that Jack Built

Somehow, miscreant GOP operative Jack Abramoff’s career was once even



viler. Fresh out of college, Abramoff headed a Washington think tank that served as a front organization for a South African military intelligence operation codenamed “Operation Babushka.”

In 1983, when he headed the College Republican National Committee, Abramoff forged links with a pro-Apartheid

student union in South Africa that was funded by the state security forces. According to the *Mail and Guardian* of South Africa, out of this meeting came the International Freedom Foundation (IFF), whose Washington bureau Abramoff staffed until 1989.

According to Truth and Reconciliation Commission researcher John Daniels, South African military intelligence helped set up the foundation. An intelligence agent involved explained that Operation Babushka was meant to persuade foreign businessmen in favor of Apartheid. IFF’s role was to mask South African involvement. “They ran their own organization,” the agent said, “but we steered them.”

—Dave Mulcahey

benefit doesn't really address the problem of high drug costs. Even with the benefit, many seniors will still find drugs to be a severe burden. In fact, because of the sharp increase in drug costs since 2000, Medicare beneficiaries will be paying more in 2006 with the benefit than they did in 2000 without it. Since drug costs are projected to continue to rise at a 9 percent annual rate, this burden will grow rapidly in the years ahead. The drug benefit also takes up a substantial chunk of the federal budget, costing more than \$700 billion over its first 10 years. At a time when cutbacks are proposed for everything from food stamps to cancer research, this looks like real money.

It didn't have to be this way. Congress could have established a simple drug benefit that was an add-on to the existing Medicare program. This would be comparable to the drug coverage that most people have through private insurers, with beneficiaries required to make modest co-payments depending on the type of drug they buy. (The co-payments would be subsidized for low-income beneficiaries, as is now done with Medicaid.) Establishing a single centralized system to administer the benefit would have saved almost \$50 billion over the first ten years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

There could be even larger savings if Medicare used its enormous bargaining power to negotiate lower prices with the pharmaceutical industry. For example, in Australia, which has the lowest drug prices of all industrialized countries, the government negotiates directly with the pharmaceutical companies. The result is that drugs there cost on average 45 percent less than in the United States. A similar approach could save the United States \$800 billion over the program's first 10 years.

The savings from a centralized system and negotiated prices would be so large that the money the government is currently projected to pay under the Bush plan would be enough to completely cover seniors' drug needs, eliminating co-payments, deductibles, premiums or gaps in coverage. In another scenario, if Congress had designed an efficient drug plan, seniors could pay modest premiums and co-payments, and the federal and state governments could save perhaps \$100 to \$200 billion of the funds committed to the Medicare drug plan. Moreover, under

snapshot



HAITI: Election officials read ballots by candlelight at a polling station in Port-Au-Prince following the February 2006 presidential elections. Four people were reported dead and dozens more were injured as angry crowds stormed voting centers that opened hours late. (Photo: Roberto Schmidt/AFP Photo)

a better designed plan, seniors would not have to spend hours surfing the Web to determine their best option.

But Congress thought it was more important to meet the needs of the insurance and pharmaceutical industries. Rather than authorizing Medicare to build on its own successful system, the Republican bill actually prohibits Medicare from offering a drug plan and negotiating directly with the pharmaceutical industry. The insurance industry would almost certainly lose out if it was forced to compete with Medicare, which does not have massive marketing expenses, highly paid CEOs and shareholders who demand dividends.

Similarly, the lower prices that Medicare could negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry would mean lower drug industry profits—an outcome that President Bush and the Republican Congress were not about to back.

Fortunately, this is an election year. The Medicare drug bill offers a rare opportunity for the Democrats, if they care to take it. In both the House and Senate, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Sen.

Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) have proposed bills that set up a Medicare drug benefit that would save seniors and the government hundreds of billions of dollars.

News accounts and polling data suggest that seniors are outraged by the Bush administration's drug benefit. A December 15 *Wall Street Journal* poll showed that people over age 64 disapproved of the new drug plan by a margin of 40 percent to 23 percent. Seniors vote in vastly disproportionate numbers in off-year elections. In addition, there is an extensive grassroots network in place after last year's victory on Social Security. Many of the organizations that successfully defended Social Security, such as Campaign for America's Future and US-Action, would gladly join the battle for a decent Medicare drug benefit.

In Washington, there is a joke that the difference between Republicans and Democrats is that Republicans try to win elections. If the Democrats don't make fixing the drug benefit a top election priority in 2006, then the joke is on them once again.

—Dean Baker

BY IVAN ELAND

Perhaps We Should Do Nothing in Iran



THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION is moving toward military action against Iran, despite its current public stance of supporting multilateral diplomacy. Surprisingly, that eventual outcome may also comport with the interests of the Iranian government. The real losers in this arms-length conspiracy between the two hostile governments will be the American and Iranian peoples.

For the moment, the Bush administration is playing a more sophisticated diplomatic game against Iran than it did during the ham-handed run-up to the invasion of Iraq, which led to U.S. isolation from most of the rest of the world. Rather than taking rash, almost unilateral, action, the administration seems to be willing to let multilateral diplomacy play out in order to build international support for a military response.

President Bush has said that Iran should not be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon and recently used the term “grave” to describe the threat from Iran—eerily, the same term he used to describe the threat from Iraq before the U.S. invasion. A source on Capitol Hill told me that anti-Iranian hawks are already making speeches and introducing bills to build the case for a military attack.

But after the disaster in Iraq, an invasion is unlikely, especially with almost 150,000 U.S. forces still tied down in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, the Bush administration would probably opt for air strikes targeting Iran’s nuclear sites. Although aerial bombardment might set back the Iranian nuclear program, it would probably not eliminate it. After Israeli air strikes against Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981, nuclear aspirants dispersed and hid atomic facilities, buried them or placed them in highly populated areas where bombing would kill many innocent civilians. If the intelligence on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is any indication, U.S. intelligence on Iranian nuclear facilities likely isn’t good, rendering air strikes ineffective.

Why then would the Bush administration go down this route? Because much of government policy is to show the domestic audience that something is being done about a problem, especially when the threat from an external “enemy” has been embellished. With a long confrontation with Iran and eventual air strikes, the Bush administration could distract attention from the deteriorating situations in Iraq and Afghanistan for many months without risking yet another quagmire in Iran.

President Bush used the word ‘grave’ to describe the threat from Iran—eerily, the same term he once used to describe the threat from Iraq.

At the start, only mild international economic sanctions will likely be placed on Iran. Here the United States will fall victim to the first consequence of its invasion of Iraq. Other countries are suspicious that a hard-line approach against Iran will encourage the United States to do what it did against Iraq. Yet economic sanctions, no matter how strong, will be unlikely to compel the Iranian government to get rid of its nuclear program, which has wide public support in Iran.

Another consequence of the invasion of Iraq, a country that was not even close to getting a nuclear weapon, is that Iran, which was much closer than Iraq to that goal, has seen how the United States treated non-nuclear “rogue” states. As a result, Iran accelerated its nuclear program to acquire the ultimate deterrent against the United States and Israel. No

wonder Iran has been unwilling to accept Western trade and investment goodies to negotiate away its nuclear program.

But if the aggressive Bush administration is prone to military action, why is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the new Iranian

president, making inflammatory comments that could allow the United States to portray him as madman who requires a military drubbing? Perhaps Ahmadinejad realizes that a U.S. invasion is unlikely and that air strikes by the “Great Satan” would help him win over a young population that is tired of Islamic radicalism and wants to reestablish ties with the world. Thus, U.S. air strikes could benefit both governments at the expense of their peoples.

Against this policy, the United States should accept the fact that Iran will probably obtain nuclear weapons and use the massive U.S. nuclear arsenal to deter the use of any puny Iranian nuclear force. Something similar was done when China obtained nuclear weapons in the mid-to-late ’60s. Also, “the return of the radicals”—as represented by Ahmadinejad—will likely generate a counterrevolution among the Iranian people, who want to reconnect with the world, according to Jack A. Goldstone, an expert on revolutions at the George Mason School of Public Policy. Similar counterrevolutions have happened in China after the Cultural Revolution and in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s purges.

So instead of the Bush administration’s activist stance against the fulminating Iranian regime and its nuclear program, perhaps a “do-nothing” policy would achieve better results with much less cost in blood and treasure. ■

IVAN ELAND is a senior fellow at *The Independent Institute* and author of *The Empire Has No Clothes* and *Putting “Defense” Back into U.S. Defense Policy*.

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

Friedan and King: Super Models



WITHIN THE SPACE of a week, three stories were front page news—the deaths of Betty Friedan and Coretta Scott King and this newsflash from the *New York Times*: “Some Democrats Are Sensing Missed Opportunities.”

Talk about understatement, especially when the whopping lies of the Bush administration continue to pile up (Bush never met Abramoff, domestic spying is legal, no one at the White House knew

the levees had broken). The old white guys in the party—Harry Reid, John Kerry, Howard Dean—and the disappointing female leaders like Pelosi and especially Hillary Clinton (Joe Lieberman in drag) would do well to consider what Friedan and King achieved in their lifetimes.

King, of course, endured real threats to her and her family’s safety and, as Jimmy Carter pointedly reminded us (bless you, Jimmy), surveillance of their private life. She was enormously courageous.

But so was Friedan, who forged ahead to change the lives of millions of women of several generations despite ongoing ridicule of her politics and, crucially and repeatedly, her looks. But in addition to the lessons in courage the Democrats might take from these women, they might note that both women fought for concrete, systematic policies and laws—to be enacted and enforced by, yes, state and federal governments—that dramatically reduced and, in some cases, ended inequality.

The major obituaries of Friedan, especially in the *Times* and on PBS’s “News Hour,” either missed or underplayed this point entirely. Instead, it seemed that the main things Friedan did was coin a term—“the feminine mystique”—and change people’s minds about women’s roles. It’s true, *The Feminine Mystique* was the number one bestselling paperback of 1964 and it has continued, to this day, to help women appreciate the costs of being defined only as a wife and mother, and of being economically and emotionally dependent on men. In this age when cultural politics and discourse seem to matter more than the law, the obits highlighted Friedan’s contribution to consciousness raising, and downplayed how she and legions of feminist allies fought for a new legal system.

So let’s remember what economic, political and social life was like for women in 1964. Want ads in the newspapers were segregated by gender, meaning that women simply

could not apply for some jobs. Discrimination and admissions quotas to graduate and professional schools meant that women could be nurses but not doctors, teachers but not professors, secretaries but not managers or executives, paralegals but not lawyers. It was worse for African American and Latina women, who were consigned primarily to domestic and agricultural work. High school and college sports were for boys, not girls. Women could not get credit cards or mortgages in their own names, and when a couple applied for a mortgage the wife’s salary was not counted because it was “pin money.” Abortion was illegal, there were no sexual harassment laws, no battered women’s shelters and a woman had to have two eyewitnesses to get a rape conviction. There was no pregnancy leave, and once a married working woman got pregnant, she also got fired.

All of this has changed because of legislation and court cases: not ideas and discourse alone, but the law. In 1963, Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act and in 1964, at the last minute, women succeeded in getting the word “sex” added to the list of things you could

Recall life in 1964: Abortion was illegal, there were no sexual harassment laws, no battered women’s shelters and a conviction of rape required two eyewitnesses.

not discriminate against in the Civil Rights Act—the all-important Title VII. Some congressmen regarded the addition of this word as a joke, so laughingly approved it, thinking no one would actually enforce such a prohibition. They were wrong. With the founding of the National Organization for Women in 1966, Friedan and a cohort of feminist compatriots began suing entities in violation of the law—and winning.

Coretta Scott King continued her husband’s work on racial justice and peace. She also dedicated herself to establishing the King Center in Atlanta and to advocating that her husband’s birthday become a national holiday. As a result, institutions all over the country, especially schools, take a day to recall what the Civil Rights Movement did accomplish, and what still needs to be done.

If the Democrats would truly study what these women accomplished, they might have something to say that would include plans for new institution building and legislative initiatives. They might say, “We fought against poverty before, we can do it again. We fought to support women and children before, we can do it again. We fought against racial injustice before, we can do it again.”

Democrats don’t need to raise people’s consciousness about these issues. Like Friedan and King, they need to offer concrete proposals for progress before we regress to a time when nothing seemed possible. ■

BY CRAIG AARON

Untangling the Next Telecom Act



IF WHAT THEY say about those who fail to learn from history is true, it's troubling that the 10th anniversary of the Telecommunications Act just passed with barely a blip outside the business pages.

The 1996 Act is the quintessential example of corrupt media policymaking. Hashed out behind closed doors by industry lobbyists with almost no public input, the bill killed local radio, gave away the public airwaves worth billions to the biggest media

companies for free, and spawned a wave of consolidation that left consumers with higher prices and fewer choices.

At the time, most citizens—or even members of Congress—had no idea what the massive legislation contained. This was no surprise: In the nine months before the bill passed, the major networks aired only 12 stories about it—totaling 19 minutes. Big media companies, of course, were among the bill's biggest beneficiaries.

Congress is reopening the Telecom Act again—and this time the future of the Internet is at risk. When lawmakers first began drafting the 1996 bill five years earlier, Web browsers didn't yet exist—and the word "Internet" only appeared 11 times in the final text. But now that video, radio, telephone and the Internet all can be delivered over the same broadband connection, the regulatory lines must be redrawn.

Media consolidation in the 21st century also has a new face. In a 10,000-channel universe, power comes from owning the conduits to communications technology. The emerging "network giants"—like Verizon, AT&T, Comcast and Time Warner—already control millions of Americans' access to the Internet as well as a large portion of the broadband "backbone." They stand to make a killing if the new Telecom Act is shaped to their specifications.

Rather than one big omnibus bill, we'll probably see a series of measures over the next two years—originating in the House and Senate Commerce Committees—that will change and add to current law, piece by piece. At the center of the debate will be three complex but crucial issues.

Net Neutrality The Internet always has been guided by the principle of "network neutrality"—meaning you can access any Web site, use any application and send any information without interference from your Internet provider. The network's only job is to move data. But the biggest cable and telephone companies want to exploit their control over the "pipes" to squeeze out their competition—especially In-

ternet phone and video services—and charge other content creators a premium to travel at the fastest speeds. They envision a two-tiered Internet with a wide-open express lane for themselves and their partners, and a winding dirt road for the rest of us. Opponents of this scheme are pushing to write net neutrality into law.

Community Internet High-speed Internet access is fast becoming a basic public necessity—like water, gas or electricity. Yet with 98 percent of the market dominated by the network giants, the United States has dropped to 16th in the world in broadband penetration. Hundreds of cities and towns are finding that the best path to universal, affordable Internet access is to do it themselves. The cable and telephone conglomerates want laws that outlaw municipal competition. But Congress has the chance to create a truly free market in which local governments are free to decide what best serves their citizens.

Video Franchising In exchange for letting the cable company operate as a monopoly and dig up the streets, cities negotiate "franchise agreements" that guarantee them

The last thing that the network giants want is for the public to realize what's going on—which is why it's never been more important to speak out.

fair rent, wiring for local schools and libraries, and funding for public access TV channels. But now the phone companies want to get in the video business—without haggling with local officials. While more competition would be good for consumers, the network giants are trying to shed obligations to offer universal service and to fund public access TV—often the last refuge for local news and government information. State- or national-level franchising may be inevitable, but it shouldn't come at the expense of the public interest or local control.

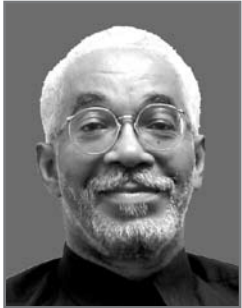
How these new rules are written will have tremendous implications for the future of communications—and our democracy. Who will control the technology needed to access, create and share media? Will the broadest sources of culture and information be available? How will consumers be able to utilize these new communications networks? Will access be affordable and available to everyone?

As long as the network giants and their lobbyists can keep the discussion couched in technical terms, hidden behind closed doors and buried on the back pages of the newspaper, the needs of ordinary people will be left far behind. The last thing that the network giants want is for the public to realize what's going on—which is why it's never been more important to make your voice heard. ■

Russell Newman co-authored this column.

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

Islam vs. the West: Clashing Sensibilities



WERE IT PLAUSIBLE, I would suggest that al Qaeda and American neo-conservatives planted the cartoons published last fall in a Danish newspaper that satirized Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim masses' predictably furious response to the cartoons provides perfect inversely proportionate illustrations of the two cults' clash-of-civilizations scenario.

But in fact, this increasingly rancorous dispute does pit two foundational principles against each other: Islam's proscription against portraying its Prophet, and the West's reverence of free expression. Muslims have a religious obligation to take offense at "desecration" of Islam, while Western nations feel compelled to speak up in protection of free speech.

These clashing views have put in motion a cycle of mutual antagonism that is likely to keep spiraling downward unless cooler heads prevail.

This Islamic ire is not difficult to understand, really. When Louis Farrakhan allegedly called Judaism a "gutter religion" in 1984 he was denounced from pillar to post, and more than 20 years later he still catches flack for those reported remarks. Congress even got into the act, unanimously passing legislation condemning Farrakhan's words. The phrase "freedom of expression" was seldom heard during this controversy; nor were there reiterations of Farrakhan's words in gestures of sympathy for that libertarian concept.

At that time, Americans seemed to understand that expressions of religious bigotry had to be resolutely condemned. This was a progressive step for a nation once mired in anti-Semitic bias. Muslims are asking similar condemnations of the cartoons they construe as attacks on their religion.

The cartoons were offensive not only because they depicted the Prophet, but because the depictions were disrespectful of the deep reverence Muslims have for the founder of their religion. Whenever Prophet Muhammad's name is mentioned (even in informal conversations), believers always add "peace and blessings be upon him."

The offense is compounded by what many feel is the West's hypocrisy on the issue of free expression. Several Muslim commentators have noted that freedom of expression stops at holocaust denial in a number of European countries, including France and Germany (where the cartoons were pub-

lished in solidarity with the concept of free expression).

All of this is taking place in a global context informed by a history of Western imperialism and a current resurgence of that aggression. Islamist groups long have argued that the West has launched a new crusade against Islam. Following the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, that argument has a lot more traction.

In a post-9/11 world, growing numbers of Muslims feel they are being demonized by an increasingly Islamophobic West. And, several Islamic and human rights groups have documented increasing incidents of persecution against Muslims. That sense of injustice has helped to propel the electoral success of Islamist parties in Gaza (Hamas), Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood) and Lebanon (Hezbollah). Islamists are using the cartoon flap to give popular resonance across the Islamic world to their notion of a new Crusade.

Jihad Unspun, a Web site that reflects the radical views of Sunni "mujahideen" presents an example of this mindset. In a recent editorial, the Web publication denounced

the military aggression that "has swallowed Afghanistan and Iraq, and is heading towards Iran, Syria and Pakistan." Referring to the cartoon flap, the editorial added, "The new phase of the crusades, this time on cultural and social levels, has been sparked not by the U.S. but her low-profile and smaller allies in Europe."

Of course, Muslims also have some growing up to do. The violent protests run counter to Islam, which forbids any compulsion in religion and it does not require non-Muslims to follow Islam's religious rites. What's more, such reactions vindicate the views of those neoconservatives who argue that Muslims are inherently anti-modernist. "As a Muslim, I can understand the emotional intensity of the issue, however, responding through violence does not uphold the dignity of our faith," said Mahdi Bray, head of the civil rights bureau of the Washington-based Muslim American Society. And, according to commentators from the various regions of protest, only a small minority is engaged in violence.

Muslims also have to understand that the freedom of expression ideal is one of the West's distinguishing principles. Just as it allows for religious satire, it also allows for religious freedom. In fact, the West's statutory protections have likely shielded many Islamic minorities from nativist opposition.

This is a clash of sensibilities, not civilizations. But if Western and Islamic governments allow the cultists to push the agenda, the choreography of polarization will take over. ■

The violent reactions of some Muslims vindicate the arguments of neoconservatives that Islam is an inherently anti-modernist religion.

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

The Crescent Menace



OPERATION RESCUE FOUNDER Randall Terry, having already passed himself off as an expert on women's reproductive health, is now a self-proclaimed scholar of Islam, having studied the subject at Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In a February 6 article distributed by the Christian Newswire, Terry lambasts the media for not re-running the cartoons about Mohammed that "show the true nature of Islam." "The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN and other media outlets bow in subservience to Islamic fear mongers, warmongers and terrorists," he writes.

Such "appeasement," according to Terry, replicates the situation in the mid-'30s when the British press refused to tell the truth about Hitler and Nazism. "Millions needlessly died—including tens of thousands of American soldiers—because the guardians of justice and liberty were afraid to declare the truth and exert their moral authority when it was their duty to do so," he writes. "A serious study of the life of Mohammed and his successors shows that intimidation, terror, brutal punishment and even death awaited those who fell under Islamic rule."

Randall's "serious study" of Islam can be found on www.randallterry.com. In "Is Islam a Threat to Freedom?" he writes, "I am convinced that Islam, the theological/cultural/political construct that seeks to rule the minds, bodies, and souls of all mankind is an inherent threat to liberty."

A selective reading of Christian scripture could of course lead one to a similar conclusion. As Leviticus 20:13 instructs, "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them

have done what is detestable. They must be put to death." Not to say that Terry takes the Bible literally, otherwise he would have slain his son Jamiel, who came out publicly two years ago. Instead he banished him from the home. As for his Muslim daughter, Ebony, they remain close.

Of course, Terry is not opposed to theocracy per se. He has made no bones about his desire to turn America into a Christian nation. He told an anti-abortion rally in Fort Wayne, Ind., "Our goal is a Christian nation. ... We have a biblical duty, we are called by God to conquer this country. We don't want equal time. We don't want pluralism. ... Theocracy means God rules."

Just not the god of Mohammed. Terry concludes his study of Islam by noting that should it come to America, it "would destroy the U.S. Constitution, and the experiment in self government that we have enjoyed for nearly 250 years." In short, Islam, he writes, is "as dangerous as the philosophy and goals of communism ever were."

Yikes.

Writing in the *Weekly Standard*, Editor William Kristol, apparently agrees. "This is a moment of truth in the global struggle against Islamic extremism. Will Hamas succeed in creating a terror state on the West Bank? Will a terror-sponsoring Iranian regime succeed in its quest for nuclear weapons? Will Danish imams succeed in intimidating Europe—or the free world as a whole?" he asks, "Robert Frost said of liberals that they're incapable of taking their own side in a fight. We will see how deeply a degenerate form of liberalism has penetrated our souls. Will we anguish? Or will we fight?"

There is little doubt what Kristol, along with his neocon brothers, would do—and want to do. As Ivan

Eland, formerly of the Cato Institute, notes on page 14, "Anti-Iranian hawks are already introducing bills to build the case for a military attack."

These are troubled times—if not end times. Chip Berlet, an expert on the Christian right at Political Research Associates, has pointed out on Chip's Blog that the Bush administration has forged an "apocalyptic coalition" between the Christian right and the neocons. "Apocalyptic violence is justified from a religious perspective by the Christian Right and from a secular perspective by the neoconservatives. Both want to 'take dominion' over the earth," he writes.

Similarly, in an online essay, Ohio State religion professor Hugh Urban noted some "weirdly similar and disturbing parallels" between the neocons and Christian evangelicals. He writes, "The former openly advocates a 'new American Century' and a 'benevolent hegemony' of the globe by U.S. power, inaugurated by the invasion of Iraq, while the latter predicts a new Millennium of divine rule ushered in by apocalyptic war, first in Babylon and then in Jerusalem."

Speaking of Jerusalem

In the interview on page 36, Gen. William Odom, a former director of the National Security Agency, notes the role the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) played in fanning the flames of war in Iraq.

"It seems to me that it's pretty hard to imagine us going into Iraq without the strong lobbying efforts from AIPAC and the neocons," he observes. "The invisible elephant in the room on this issue is the Israeli factor."

That factor is coming into play again as the world grapples with how best to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions.

According to the *Washington Post's* Dafna Linzer, AIPAC serves a mouth-

piece for Israel, “speaking out when Israeli government officials express private frustration with U.S. policies.” Late last year, AIPAC, which normally operates behind the scenes, went public with a criticism of the Bush administration. In an advisory to members of Congress, it said that the November decision not to bring Iran before the U.N. Security Council “indicates a disturbing shift in the administration’s policy on Iran and poses a danger to the U.S. and our allies.”

This was the sentiment apparently long held by former Defense Department analyst Lawrence A. Franklin, who in 2003 gave “highly classified” government secrets to two AIPAC lobbyists and Naor Gilon, the political officer at the Israeli Embassy.

Franklin, an Iranian expert, did not think the Bush administration was taking a hard enough line with Iran. So, to remedy the situation, he passed classified information about Iran via AIPAC to “back channels”—i.e., Israel and the media. His goal was to get that information before the National Security Council. (Defense Department officials tried a similar sleight-of-hand prior to the war in Iraq, using such tools as the *New York Times’* Judith Miller and Ahmed Chalabi to launder defense “intelligence.”)

On January 20, Franklin, in a plea

agreement, was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison. In April, the two AIPAC operatives will go on trial for passing the classified information Franklin gave them to journalists and Israel. One of the lobbyists, Steven J. Rosen, was AIPAC’s director of foreign policy issues. Franklin, as part of his plea agreement, will testify against them.

Speaking of the upcoming trial, Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, played the anti-Semitism card. Saying that it was unacceptable that “this kind of climate can exist in the capital of the United States,” he told a conference at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya in Israel, “The very fact that two patriotic American citizens who are working for a Jewish organization who did nothing to violate American security should have to stand trial and be subject to the public scrutiny and public humiliation frankly I find very disturbing and a matter that we all have to look at in a much more serious way.”

Primary fights

MoveOn has been canvassing its members, asking: “Should we take on right-wing Democrats?”

“Yes, I think we should support chal-

lengers to right-wing Democrats,” answered 84 percent of those who responded to the survey.

“MoveOn members have certainly told us that they were disappointed in some Democrats, not the party overall,” says Tom Matzzie, MoveOn’s Washington director. “And that they want to build a progressive majority at the same time we try to end the Republican stranglehold on Congress. Democrats need to stand up and fight. Some right-wing Democrats are making it more difficult for the party to communicate its message, which is an important part of how Democrats will be able to win.”

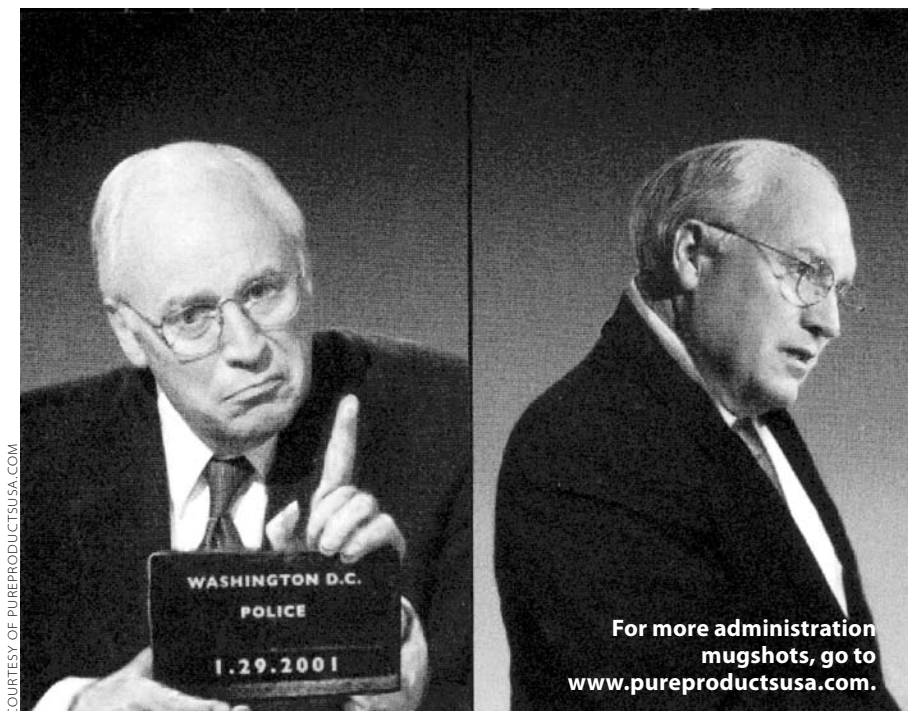
MoveOn has already decided to endorse *Ciro Rodriguez* against incumbent Rep. *Henry Cuellar* (D-Texas). Cuellar, who campaigned with George W. Bush, is one of the “CAFTA 15”—the 15 House Democrats who voted in support of the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

The AFL-CIO and Change to Win are both working for Rodriguez. “This Texas race is where the entire progressive movement has united against a right-wing Democrat,” says Matzzie.

“That is the low-hanging fruit,” he says. Somewhat less accessible is Sen. *Joseph Lieberman* (D-Conn.). “Certainly we are hearing a lot from our members who are angry at Lieberman for cheerleading the war in Iraq,” he says. MoveOn is considering whether to throw its organization behind Ned Lamont, who is still getting a primary challenge to Lieberman off the ground. “We have set a standard with our members that we are not going to play games,” says Matzzie. “We will only offer the support of our members to candidates who are serious.”

For too long, says Matzzie, “progressives have tiptoed around the betrayals of some Democrats. We don’t want to be tearing down the Democratic Party when they are playing hard on some key issues. But we think there are Democratic defectors who are undermining the party—the DINO[s] [Democrats in Name Only.]”

So far Matzzie has not received much negative reaction. “There have been a few operatives who have nervously called me,” he said, “but I think the Democratic leaders are just as frustrated with right-wing Democrats as people at the grassroots.” ■



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FORGET D.C. **THE BATTLE** **IS IN THE STATES**

BY NATHAN NEWMAN & DAVID SIROTA

Speaking to a packed room of 2,000 state legislators and business lobbyists gathered in Grapevine, Texas, last fall, George W. Bush thanked the crowd for its work on behalf of the conservative agenda. He wasn't talking about work they'd done on Capitol Hill, but about their collaboration to push the corporate agenda forward in statehouses across the country. The meeting was the 32nd annual gathering of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a membership

association for conservative lawmakers. As its chairman, Georgia State Rep. Earl Ehrhart, said of the president's speech: "It was like the governor of a state talking to his legislative leaders."

This is the critical point: The highest echelons of the conservative movement and corporate America treat state legislators not as members of 50 different institutions, but as a single set of leaders who can be mobilized on a national basis.

Recognizing this reality, the Progressive Legislative Action Network (PLAN) was formed in fall 2005 to create a counterforce to the right in statehouses across the country. Supported by groups like MoveOn and the Center for American Progress, along with unions like SEIU, AFSCME, the AFL-CIO and the Steelworkers, PLAN is working with state legislators across the country to move both a united agenda and strategic plan to take on ALEC and its allies throughout the country.

The conservative march through the states

The need to challenge the right-wing movement in the states is clear. ALEC claims more than 2,400 state lawmakers as members—roughly one-third of all state legislators—and has become one of the critical fulcrums of conservative power in the United States. Backed by many of the largest corporations in the country—including Exxon Mobil, Coors Brewing, Pfizer and Philip Morris—ALEC is networked into conservative think tanks and allied political operations such as the Heartland Institute and the corporate-backed American Tort Reform Association. At the center of this network, ALEC helps draft and promote legislation that has crippled social service budgets, deregulated industries, slashed medical care for the poor, and undermined consumer and worker protections in state after state.

In 2004 alone, 1,108 ALEC model bills were introduced and 178 were enacted into law, a legislative assault that ALEC and its conservative allies have been repeating year after year. Given the prominence of its legislative supporters—34 state speakers of the house, 25 state senate presidents, 31 state senate leaders and

33 state house leaders are ALEC members—this success is hardly surprising.

Sadly, in the face of this daunting right-wing machine, many progressive leaders and activists remain fixated on Capitol Hill and the White House, leaving state legislators, local political organizations and unions to battle ALEC all alone. The problem is compounded by a national media that barely covers these state struggles. Even the most sophisticated national political commentators typically see fights for control of state legislatures as important only insofar as they impact redistricting of federal congressional races. Except for the occasional media spasm around a particularly virulent state legislative proposal that hands out pork to a corporation or restricts civil rights, the overall march of conservative legislation in the statehouses gets relatively little attention from progressive activists fixated on “serious” politics at the federal level.

Yet the battle for our states is incredibly serious. The conservative strategy is to use the state political arena to leverage control of national policy, and unless progressives get focused and view the battle for the states as crucial to America’s political future, no amount of change at the federal level will allow us to take our country back.

Why state policy matters

Most progressives fail to realize that state governments collectively have as much—and in some cases, more—power over the issues they care about as the federal government. State and local revenues are about equal to federal tax revenue, and in an era of “flexibility” and “waivers,” federal money is increasingly handed over to the states with few strings attached. In explaining conservatives’ focus on state legislation, ALEC’s Medicaid specialist James Frogue observed, “Innovations and reforms in Medicaid will come from the states. They will not come from D.C.”

Most federal civil rights, consumer and employment laws only modify the baseline of rights established by state governments. In fact, only a tiny minority of legal struggles are pursued under federal statutes. Instead, state courts handle roughly 17 million civil cases every year, including contract, tort and real property disputes, the outcome of which turn overwhelm-

ingly on state, not federal, law. Through state law and liability rules, the states regulate trillions of dollars of commerce.

Similarly, while there were 170,535 federal prisoners in 2004, that number is dwarfed by the 1.9 million prisoners in state and local prisons and jails. The criminal sentencing decisions that have decimated a generation of young people in minority communities were made in statehouses, not on Capitol Hill. And one of the least-understood areas of increasing state power is that wielded by public pension funds, which now control \$2.7 trillion in financial assets and can shape financial markets with their investment decisions—a fact that the right is all too aware of as they launch campaigns to privatize those pensions.

With all this power in the hands of the states, conservatives recognize that with a coordinated strategy, a movement can govern the nation from the statehouses. States have been vulnerable to this right-wing takeover because most state legislatures are made up of poorly paid, part-time lawmakers with few—if any—staff to research or evaluate the laws they are asked to approve. The lack of resources means there are few staffers in legislatures who can challenge the expertise presented by ALEC and other conservative operatives, or uncover the hidden payoffs for corporate interests contained in legislation. Thus ALEC provides a stealthy, tax-exempt front for corporate interests to sell their ideas directly to statehouse leaders across the country.

At the most obvious level, ALEC gives a “public interest” sheen to the raw special pleading of Big Money before state legislatures. Here are just a few of these recent corporate campaigns:

- Backed by the oil industry, ALEC has lined up legislators to lower taxes on gasoline and to undermine regulations aimed at curbing the carbon dioxide emissions leading to global warming.
- Backed by the drug companies, ALEC has mounted a full-scale campaign to defeat initiatives by cities and states to promote importing lower-priced select medicines from Canada.
- Backed by low-wage employers, ALEC has promoted legislation to block local governments from rais-

ing local minimum wages or even requiring government contractors to pay a fair wage to their employees.

- Backed by the telephone companies, ALEC has worked to bar or hamstring cities that have sought to build cheaper or even free Internet services for their residents.
- Backed by the insurance companies, ALEC has been promoting a campaign to stop state insurance commissioners from requiring insurance companies to meet the same accountability and auditing rules that were imposed on publicly-traded corporations in the wake of the Enron debacle.
- And ALEC has been advocating cracking down on seniors who shelter income in a home while using Medicaid to finance long term care, a campaign that would force seniors to buy “reverse annuity mortgages,” a new financial instrument promoted by ALEC’s financial services industry funders.

The right’s strategic agenda

Still, if the right-wing movement in the states only amounted to a series of individual profit-driven campaigns, the threat posed by ALEC would merely be one of a slick, well-funded public relations operation, albeit a nasty and effective one.

But the real danger from ALEC and its associated organizations comes from conservatives’ aim to structurally undermine the very capacities of government that restrain corporate power and to fuel campaigns that fracture progressive alliances and political power.

Grover Norquist, head of Americans for Tax Reform and arguably the premiere right-wing strategist, has famously described the conservative goal as cutting government “down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub.” Key to that objective is cutting tax revenues and using constitutional limits on state taxing powers to make it politically impossible to fund social needs through government action. This strategy serves not just to limit progressive policy but, by creating a limited pool of funds, pits progressive groups against each other in a fight for resources.

Conservatives also aim to shut down

the enforcement of business regulations across the states. The very success of state attorneys general in bringing tobacco and financial firms to heel has led to a backlash to limit the power of attorneys general. And where citizens have the ability to enforce regulations in the courts, the right has been gutting those citizens' legal powers. For example, one of the first acts of Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration was forcing through restrictions on the state labor code's Private Attorney General Act, which had given advocates greater power to enforce the state's labor laws.

In the last few years, no issue has consumed corporate America more than shutting the courtroom door to plaintiffs injured by corporate malfeasance under the campaign of "tort reform." Damage awards have been limited and judges have increasingly been granted the right to exclude evidence of corporate wrongdoing by limiting plaintiff witnesses. This is done through the banning of so-called "junk science," with an often-politically connected judge (rather than the jury) getting to decide which witnesses are credible. The end result of this campaign is to make it nearly impossible for poor plaintiffs to get a day in court or to prevent a judge from overturning any judgment in their favor.

Another key strategy for the corporate right is privatization, a strategy that both undermines labor standards for government services and opens the labor market to corporate profiteering. The conservative-induced budget crises in many states

have served to help this process along. In 2002, ALEC co-wrote a report with the Manhattan Institute that made privatization a key solution for balancing state budgets. They proposed that Medicaid be replaced with private Medical Savings Accounts and public schools be funded with vouchers. Similarly, prison management would be privatized. Name an area of government and conservatives are seeking to hand its operations over to corporate allies who, in turn, can eliminate labor unions and use the profits to fund more campaign contributions to their political machine.

A special case of privatization has been the recent assault on state employee pension funds. In 2005, Alaska passed legislation ending guaranteed pensions for all newly hired state employees in favor of individual accounts, and legislators in California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Virginia are heading in the same direction.

The most obvious goal is to cut benefits for union workers by ending guaranteed benefits—using exactly the same rhetoric of "choice" that President Bush employed to sell his Social Security privatization scheme at the federal level. But what really enrages conservatives are decisions by trustees of these pension funds to use their shareholder voting power to challenge corporate abuses, such as the pension funds in Ohio, New York and California that voted to divest in firms involved in privatization. And of course,

there is the direct payoff to the financial services firms who will end up administering the millions of private accounts in a privatized state pension system and collecting the billions of dollars in fees.

Defunding the left

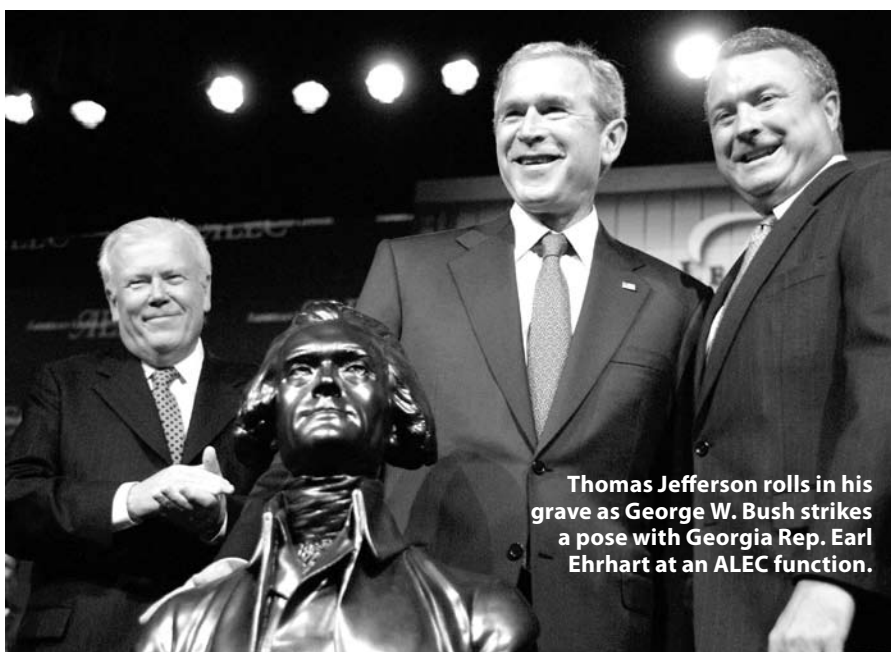
The shift in control of financial assets from public trustees to private corporations highlights the most pervasive and dangerous goal of the right's campaign in the states: defunding progressive institutions and thereby leaving corporations—and a few religious conservative allies—as the only forces with significant resources in politics.

Take the 2003 legislation passed in Texas that reserved family planning dollars, including those from the federal government, exclusively for healthcare providers that do not offer abortion services or referrals. This kind of proposal, coupled with "gag rules" and "abstinence only" legislation, not only shifts abortion policy, but strips resources from the broader pro-choice community. Similarly, the push for "faith based initiatives" shifts resources from nonprofits embedded in social justice networks to conservative organizations engaged in active conservative politics.

State-based "Right to Work" campaigns were conservatives' original weapons to cut off union dues, one of the primary sources of funding for political campaigns that oppose conservatives day-in and day-out. The present round of attacks is labeled "paycheck protection"—a nice-sounding term for crippling union workers' ability to donate political contributions through workplace deductions.

The whole right-wing attack on the civil justice system also has the effect of cutting the fees for employment and other trial lawyers, who have been strong sources of political funding for progressive causes. Passing tort reforms nationally, Grover Norquist argued back in 1999, takes "a \$5-10 billion a year bite out of trial lawyer fees" and shuts down the progressive "get-out-the-vote effort, funded with money from trial lawyers."

By operating at the state level, Norquist et al have successfully avoided the glare of media attention and the full political focus of progressives. It's as if the right is tunneling under the foundation of progressives; by the time the ground—and financial resources—give way, it'll be too late to save the house.



Thomas Jefferson rolls in his grave as George W. Bush strikes a pose with Georgia Rep. Earl Ehrhart at an ALEC function.

MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

How progressives fight back

So how should progressives respond to this coordinated assault on every level of progressive policy?

The key is to fight back, coordinate our own battles, think as strategically as ALEC and its allies and win back power at the state level. As People for

state-specific ideas that represent home-grown progressivism. Not only will these networks help bring progressive-minded people together, but they also will serve as a hotbed of information exchange so progressive legislators can equip themselves with all of the information they need

uncomfortable public position of voting either the interests of their corporate patrons or the desires of their constituents.

For instance, recent legislative initiatives in states ranging from Virginia to Michigan to preserve public lands and stop sprawl divide sprawl developers

By operating at the state level under the media's attention, it's as if the right is tunneling under the foundation of progressives. When the ground gives way, it will be too late to save the house.

the American Way said in a 2003 report about ALEC: "Progressives need a collaborative and equally coordinated effort to successfully counter ALEC's influence, expose its corporate and right-wing ties, and defeat dangerous proposals launched by this 'common enemy.'"

While many grassroots efforts have continued across the country since that report, progressives have not established the coordinated response that is needed to beat back the right. To do so, we must take three steps.

- First, we need to develop a deep national network of progressive legislators supported by grassroots organizations. We have to establish partnerships between national organizations, grassroots activists and state legislators in each state to find

to promote progressive bills.

- Second, we need to promote a set of popular issues that define the progressive state agenda in the minds of voters. This could include raising the minimum wage, expanding health care, promoting family issues like paid family leave and pre-K education for all children, protecting free speech in the workplace as well as the political realm, and developing an energy independence policy that creates jobs in each state.
- Third, we must develop a set of policies that beat back the right-wing attack and turn the tables on conservatives. We should use legislation strategically to highlight the hypocrisy of groups like ALEC and put conservative legislators in the

from a broader population that wants both livable communities and green areas for recreation. Similarly, targeting taxpayer subsidies specifically to entrepreneurial businesses that provide a living wage, as progressives have done in a number of cities, challenges conservatives to justify their fealty to low-wage companies. Supporting paid family leave and expanded child care for working parents forces legislators to confront empty "families values" rhetoric.

Ultimately, each strategic issue will reinforce the others, undercutting opposition coalitions while adding new allies to the progressive side, exposing the hypocrisy of the conservative agenda while clarifying the progressive program, and, step-by-step, entrenching progressive power in ways that the right wing will find harder and harder to dislodge.

Progressives need to use every tool of grassroots mobilization to build unity among our side's state legislators and deploy both strong policies and innovative strategies to beat the conservatives at their own game. Our overarching strategy: find the best public policies and champion them with effective and cohesive messaging. That is what the new Progressive Legislative Action Network (PLAN) is all about. It's time to finally end conservatives' dominance of state policy. It is time for progressives to govern from the states. ■

NATHAN NEWMAN is the policy director for the Progressive Legislative Action Network (PLAN).

DAVID SIROTA is the co-chair of PLAN, and a senior editor at In These Times. This article is being published by In These Times in conjunction with the release of PLAN's report, "Governing the Nation from the Statehouses." The report can be found at www.progressivestates.org.



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Were Sanctions Worth the Price?

As conflict with Iran looms, questions remain about the moral implications of sanctions

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES



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Iraq sanctions and their aftermath.

AS HE MAKES THE rounds promoting his memoir and attempting to distance himself from the failures of the Iraq occupation, Paul Bremer consistently offers the same excuse. “I have to say I was surprised by ... how run down the economy was,” he told NPR’s Terry Gross in January. “I found a situation that was quite a bit more difficult than I had anticipated.”

If honest, this is a shocking admission. The reason Iraq’s economy was “run down” and its infrastructure decimated has more than a little to do with a massive American bombing campaign during the first Gulf War, followed by 13 years of the most comprehensive sanctions in the history of the United Nations. Bremer’s “surprise” at Iraq’s devastation is like a Union general arriving in Atlanta after Sherman and expressing shock that the place had been torched.

Bremer’s not alone in his amnesia: With the war and occupation front-and-center, the sanctions era has been relegated to a historical footnote. But we haven’t heard the last of sanctions. Recently, a growing chorus of pundits and politicians has called for sanctions against Iran. With the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty unraveling before our eyes and preemptive war discredited, sanctions seem the

only viable means of deterring regimes that seek nuclear weapons or engage in gross human rights violations.

And yet it’s easy to forget that in the waning days of the Clinton era and early Bush years, the sanctions in Iraq had increasingly few supporters. As sanctions experts David Cortright and George Lopez noted in a 2004 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the sanctions regime was “dismissed by hawks as weak and ineffective and reviled by the left for its humanitarian costs.”

The Iraq war changed all that. From the *New York Times* editorial board to Senator John Kerry, many now argue that by forcing inspections that successfully dismantled Iraq’s weapons programs, sanctions achieved U.S. policy goals without the need for an expensive and bloody war. In other words, to quote the title of Lopez and Cortright’s article, “Sanctions Worked.”

But the sanctions also caused widespread misery and death. Before possibly repeating the same mistakes, it makes sense to get a better handle on the legacy of the Iraq sanctions. Did sanctions successfully disarm Saddam Hussein “non-violently” as many now say, or did they create a humanitarian abomination of epic proportions?

Or: did they do both?

THE IDEA OF using economic blockades as a tool of coercion is as old as warfare itself, but the modern concept of sanctions as an alternative to war didn’t come about until after World War I and the League of Nations. The idea was later enshrined in Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which authorizes the Security Council to respond to “breaches of the peace” with “complete or partial interruption of economic relations.”

For the next 40 years, Cold War paralysis in the Security Council meant that multilateral U.N. sanctions were rarely used, with two exceptions: Rhodesia in 1966 and South Africa in 1977. Though more limited in scope than those later imposed on Iraq, these sanctions undoubtedly helped to bring down the apartheid regime and were widely viewed as a triumph for the international community.

“South Africa was the paradigm,” says Joy Gordon, a professor of philosophy at Fairfield University who has written extensively on sanctions. “They were seen as both peaceful and effective.”

Then came Iraq.

By the time Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the deadlock on the Security Council had crumbled along with

the Berlin Wall. In response to Iraq's aggression, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 661 requiring member states to cease all imports from or exports to Iraq. When the sanctions failed to induce Hussein's withdrawal, the United States launched Operation Desert Storm and forced his retreat. After the Gulf War, the United Nations maintained the sanctions (now modified under Resolution 687), in order to force Iraq's compliance with weapons inspectors and the other conditions of the ceasefire. They were not meant to be indefinite.

After five years of sanctions, a rising tide of U.N. officials, along with U.S. and European activists, began calling attention to the policy's catastrophic effects on the people of Iraq. In 1996, general sanctions morphed into the Oil-For-Food Program. The program allowed the Iraqi government to sell limited amounts of oil and use the proceeds to pay contractors to bring in food and humanitarian goods. The council, however, still blocked anything that qualified as "dual use" goods—items that could conceivably be used in a banned weapons program. These could include everything from water tankers to vaccines.

To articulate the full scope of the resulting humanitarian disaster is a tall order;

there have been hundreds of conflicting reports, and numbers are disputed. But one thing is clear: hundreds of thousands of Iraqis suffered and died due to sanctions.

Consider the economic toll alone. Prior to the sanctions, 60 percent of Iraq's GDP

Hussein undoubtedly exacerbated the suffering of Iraqis during the sanctions regime. But if the sanctions gave Hussein a pretext for such abuse, it's hard to see how that counts in their favor.

came from oil exports, which meant that an export ban immediately reduced the country's economy by more than half. To put this in perspective, in 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, U.S. GDP had fallen only 27 percent from its pre-depression levels. A study published in 2005 estimated that by 1993, three years into the sanctions, real per capita GDP in Iraq—adjusted by real value of the Iraqi dinar—had fallen by 98 percent, from \$718 in 1990 to just \$13.

The economic effects were amplified by the widespread bombing during the first Gulf War, when over 90,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Iraq and Kuwait. Many of these bombs hit electricity facili-

ties and water treatment plants. A declassified 1991 U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency document titled "Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities" accurately predicted the combined effects of bombing and sanctions: "With no domestic sources of both water treatment replacement parts and

some essential chemicals, Iraq will continue attempts to circumvent United Nations sanctions," it read. "Failing to secure supplies will result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population. This could lead to increased incidences, if not epidemics, of disease."

Indeed, between 1990 and 1994, the incidence of typhoid went from 11.3 to 142 per 100,000 and cholera grew from zero cases to 7.8 per 100,000.

THOUGH THE SANCTIONS stirred up much public debate in Europe and outrage across the Arab world, they received relatively little attention in the United States—until a small number of religious activists, most notably the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness (now Voices for Creative Non Violence), started publicly protesting the havoc wreaked by America's policies.

Voices was not met with a warm reception. The U.S. government prosecuted the group for violating the sanctions (by bringing banned items like aspirin into Iraq), ultimately levying a \$20,000 fine. In the press, Voices was generally portrayed as either foolish do-gooders or outright apologists for the Baathist regime. "I know people said we were dupes and useful idiots," Voices founder Kathy Kelly says wearily, "It's a sad thing to me. If you wait till you're perfect, you'll never get anything done. I know that our project was inherently flawed from the beginning because we couldn't go and do a demonstration in front of Saddam's palace," she says in reference to Hussein's horrific crackdowns on dissidents. "We quickly would have endangered other people."

Kelly is attractive and intense, with a



10 FEDERAL

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10 TEN
HAMILTON

bounty of grey-brown curls and clear, penetrating eyes. A longtime member of the Catholic Worker movement, she and others were galvanized into action in 1995, when the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) published a study in the British medical journal *Lancet* estimating that as many as 576,000 children had died as a result of the sanctions. "We realized that if we are not doing anything about this, it's unlikely that anybody else is," she says.

The FAO casualty estimate became a kind of rallying cry for sanctions opponents, and was forever immortalized in 1996, when "60 Minutes" asked then-U.N. ambassador Madeline Albright about the death toll of 500,000 children. She responded: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it."

Later studies would critique the methodology of the FAO report, but even a conservative analysis of the child morbidity and mortality rate in Iraq, published by public health and sanctions expert Richard Garfield, came up with a likely estimate of 350,000 dead children.

The bulk of these casualties came before the switch to "oil-for-food," which led to a dramatic decrease in malnutrition and a doubling of food intake. But even after the most abject humanitarian crisis was relieved, sanctions still enforced widespread social misery. "I would say sanctions made Saddam Hussein stronger, not weaker," says Denis Halliday, a former U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. "They demolished any political opposition. Middle class professionals were so busy trying to make a living or keeping their kids alive, they had no interest in changing the system."

After 13 months overseeing the Oil-for-Food program, Halliday quit in protest, eventually calling the United Nations policy "genocide." He was succeeded by Hans Von Sponeck, who lasted two years before he, too, quit in disgust.

When sanctions supporters could no longer deny its disastrous impact, they blamed Iraqis' suffering on Saddam Hussein. "If any child is without food, or medicine or a roof over his or her head in Iraq," Bill Clinton told Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! in 2000, it was because Saddam was "sticking it to his own children."

There's no question that Hussein exploited and exacerbated the suffering of

Iraqis during the sanctions regime. But if the sanctions gave Hussein a pretext for cruelty and abuse, it's hard to see how that counts as a point in the sanctions' favor: "It's as if the United States said 'We don't like Saddam, let's starve the poor Iraqis,'" says Richard Garfield. "And Saddam said: 'That's my job. You want to starve, I'll show you starving.'"

Even with Hussein bilking the United Nations and underfunding crucial health and welfare services, it's impossible to ascribe the totality of Iraq's misery under the sanctions to Hussein's treachery. For example, a much-publicized recent report on Oil-for-Food abuses estimated that the regime had skimmed as much \$10 billion dollars in kick-backs. But in 2003 the World Bank estimated that just rebuilding Iraq's basic infrastructure would cost \$55 billion dollars.

The problem, Joy Gordon says, was that U.S. policymakers refused to see the destitution caused by the sanctions as "a form of violence because it doesn't look like violence to us. There's a famous line by Woodrow Wilson," she says, "as he's describing the League of Nations' use of boycotts as a response to aggression. He calls it a 'peaceful, silent ... deadly remedy.' That's what this was."

BUT IF THE Iraq sanctions were a humanitarian and moral failure, viewed through a narrow enough lens, they were also a disarmament success. For the first time in history, multilateral sanctions helped open up a regime to international weapons inspectors, who succeeded in destroying a fairly extensive program to develop biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

For George Lopez and David Cortright, this is the legacy of the Iraq sanctions that is important to preserve. With their tag-team style and easy rapport, Cortright and Lopez come across as the Laurel and Hardy of sanctions wonkery. Lopez is short, olive-complected and voluble, Cortright, taller, pale and reserved. Together they have written some 20 articles and five books about sanctions, given hours of testimony and presentations to diplomats and U.N. policymakers and authored guidelines for assessing the impact of sanctions that were subsequently adopted by the United Nations.

Both men work out of Notre Dame's Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, which is dedicated to

studying the "causes of violence and the conditions for sustainable peace." For the pair, preserving sanctions as a viable option is part of a larger struggle to move the world toward an international governance system in which war is no longer an option, or at least, a very rare occurrence.

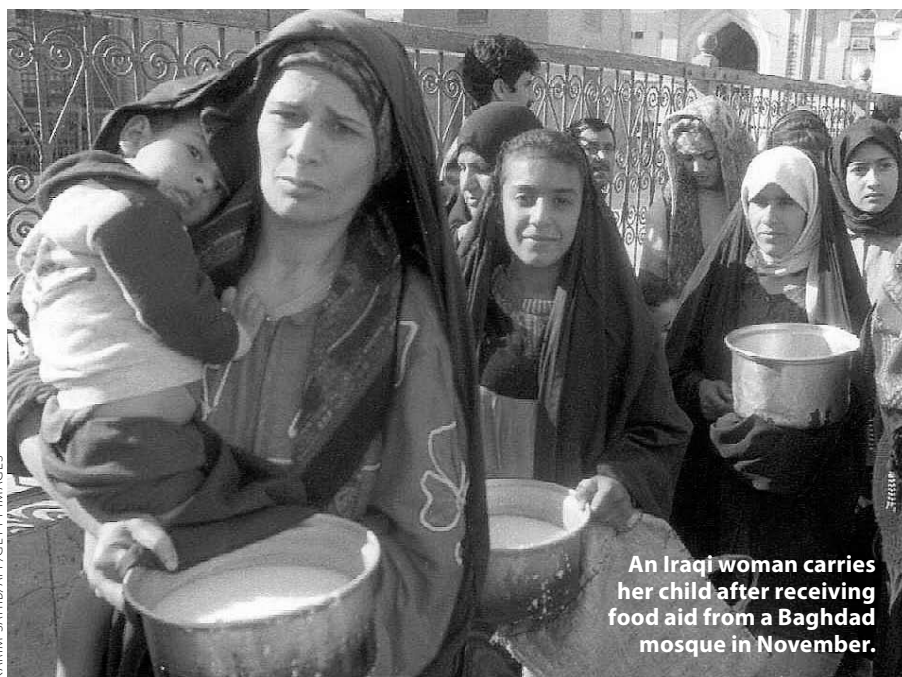
"What we're seeing is the militarization of American foreign policy," says Cortright with a hint of despair. He fears that if sanctions are discredited, we will "increasingly look to the military as a way to solve these problems."

Lopez and Cortright argue that sanctions in Iraq were most effective in the first few years after the Gulf War, when Hussein reluctantly started complying with the terms of the cease-fire. "The Iraqis were saying: 'If you get access to this, this and this, is there a chance the sanctions will come off?'" says Lopez. "So the drive for Iraqi cooperation was partly fueled by wanting to get the sanctions untightened or lifted."

But even with Iraq's continued grudging acceptance of inspectors, and significant progress in exposing and destroying banned weapons, the United States blocked any movement at the United Nations to alter or loosen the sanctions. "[Iraq] had complied with four, five, six of the eight provisions" in the original U.N. resolution, Lopez says, "and they were getting no response on the other side."

It was when Iraq realized that its compliance would bring no rewards that things began to deteriorate. In 1997, Clinton said sanctions would be maintained "until the end of time or as long as [Hussein] lasts," and on October 31, 1998, he signed the Iraqi Liberation Act, which made "regime change" the official policy of the U.S. government. The same day, Iraq announced it would no longer cooperate with inspectors; the United States pulled them from the country and retaliated with bombing raids. Sanctions stayed on after 1998 as a putative inducement to let the inspectors back in, but with the United States openly endorsing regime change, it's hard to see what Hussein had to gain from complying.

That said, Lopez and Cortright say the arrangement was still salvageable. The internationally coordinated effort to stop weapons from entering Iraq—a dragnet that was, we now know, essentially 100 percent effective—could have been de-



An Iraqi woman carries her child after receiving food aid from a Baghdad mosque in November.

linked from sanctions. “You could trade like crazy and simply focus on military means,” says Lopez. “That’s the system we advocated; the system we fought like crazy for.” They had some success. In 2001, the Bush administration pushed the United Nations to modify Oil-for-Food to allow more trade.

Even if all that is true, what about the humanitarian cost? I ask Cortright and Lopez a modified version of the infamous question to Albright: “Was it worth it?”

There’s silence. Cortright and Lopez both visibly squirm. They look at the table.

“We were less committed to the sanctions and more committed to the inspections,” says Lopez haltingly. “But we were convinced that the only thing that kept the inspections viable was to have the sanctions.” If the left had succeeded in ending sanctions, he says, you would have likely had a re-armed Iraq. “Then you’re in real trouble.” Ultimately, Lopez says, they could have gotten up on a “soap box” and condemned the sanctions, but it would have meant forfeiting their ability to influence high-level decision makers.

It strikes me, as I listen to this, that Lopez and Cortright faced the same kind of moral dilemma sanctions opponents like Kathy Kelly faced in Iraq. In hopes of mitigating suffering, they were forced to tacitly comply with a system that unquestionably produced it.

WHAT, THEN, ARE the lessons? First, sanctions cannot be an indefinite means of “containment,” Lopez and Cortright say. They should only be imposed when there are clearly defined incentives and a willingness on the part of the parties to give and take. Second, and most importantly, comprehensive economic sanctions create such hardship for the innocent that they violate fundamental principles of justice. This is now a firm consensus within policy circles. “They were *sui generis*,” Lopez says of the Iraq sanctions. “It’s unlikely you’ll ever see something like that again.”

Not everyone got the memo: A week before I interviewed Lopez and Cortright, Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) introduced a resolution calling for Bush to impose comprehensive economic sanctions on Iran.

The future of sanctions, Lopez and Cortright contend, is “smart sanctions,” which promise the benefits without the humanitarian costs by aiming the restrictions at those at the top of the regime in question. “You lock down weapons imports,” says Lopez, freeze assets and restrict travel: “The general’s daughter now can’t go to Princeton.” Since Iraq, nearly all of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations have been of this ilk.

The results are mixed: In Yugoslavia they managed to get Milosevic to the bargaining table, and in Libya they were

very effective in convincing Khadafi to stop his pursuit of nuclear weapons. In Somalia, Liberia and Rwanda, they’ve been near-total failures.

Cortright and Lopez are confident that smart sanctions will grow more effective as they are more routinely applied, but Halliday is skeptical. “In theory you can focus on the wrongdoer,” he says, “curb their travel and their goodies and their imported Jaguars, or whatever they’re into, but in the case of a dictatorship, it doesn’t make a difference. It’s not going to really upset the apple-cart.”

But if sanctions of any kind shouldn’t ever be tried again, as Halliday and Kelly both argue, the only two responses to gross violations of international norms would seem to be war or inaction. Sanctions opponents are bracing in the moral clarity of their critique of sanctions, but their proposals for alternatives—more “dialogue” and development incentives—seem a touch anemic.

It’s clear, however, that the voices of Halliday and Kelly weigh heavily on Lopez and Cortright. In an op-ed they’re circulating about the impending Iran “crisis,” Lopez and Cortright caution U.S. policymakers that “overly forceful sanctions toward Iran might be counterproductive,” and stress that sanctions work best when they are combined with incentives. The spectre of Iraq looms large.

But their op-ed seems to miss the biggest lesson. No matter how high-minded or nuanced the policy may be, it will only produce good outcomes if the countries involved act in good faith. For more than a decade, both Iraq and the United States were fundamentally acting in bad faith. Hussein was so intent on deceiving the weapons inspectors that he refused to acknowledge he had been disarmed, even after he had been, while the United States had no intention of lifting the sanctions, even after Hussein was disarmed.

When discussing early opposition to sanctions, Lopez mentioned the American Friends Service Committee, one of the earliest groups to protest the policy. According to Lopez, they feared that sanctions would be a “trap-door for war. We economically strangle him and then he won’t cry uncle so we cut off his head.”

“Isn’t that exactly what happened?” I ask.

“That is what happened,” says Lopez. “But it didn’t have to.” ■

MEN GROWING UP TO BE boys

Madison Avenue cultivates a Peter Pan version of masculinity

BY LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

WHEN CBS UNVEILED ITS short-lived series "Love Monkey" in January, leading male television critics could barely contain their enthusiasm. The *New York Times*' Alessandra Stanley was far less impressed, especially with its lead male character, thirty-something music producer Tom Farrell, whose "endearing foibles" included "self-absorption, wanting what he cannot have and an inability to commit."

Based on the eponymous 2004 novel by Kyle Smith, "Love Monkey" offered the latest iteration of "lad-lit," a genre popularized by the likes of Nick Hornby, whose novels inevitably featured a confused, neurotic, discontented man-boy being dragged kicking and screaming into adulthood, usually by his girlfriend.

But where "lad lit" authors disguise the dumbing-down of adult masculinity with witty prose, advertising executives are less subtle. Commercials for cell phones, fast food, beer and deodorants offer up an infantilized version

of masculinity that has become ubiquitous since the rise of "lad" culture in the '90s. These grown men act like boys—and are richly rewarded for it. A recent cell phone ad, for example, features a guy who responds to being dumped by his girlfriend—because "you're never going to grow up"—by playing, on his cell phone, an '80s pop song that tells her to get lost. Of course, this immediately earns him the attention of a younger, prettier woman walking by. While these ads pretend to mirror a male fantasy—say, of walking down the wedding aisle armed with a six-pack of Bud Light—they in fact reflect a corporate executive's dream customer: a man-boy who is more likely to remain faithful to their product than to his wife.

This shift in the dominant image of manhood is most evident in the evolution of the so-called "Family Man." The benevolent patriarch of the '50s has been replaced by an adult teenager who spends his time sneaking off to hang out with the boys, eyeing the hot chick over his wife's shoulder,

or buying cool new toys. Like a fourteen-year-old, this guy can't be trusted with the simplest of domestic tasks,

be it cooking dinner for the kids or shopping for groceries.

These pop culture images are all the more striking because they directly contradict the experiences of men in the real world. Women may still bear the greater burden of domestic work, but American males today do more at home than their fathers, and are happy doing it. According to the Families and Work Institute, the percentage of college-educated men who said they wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility fell from 68 percent to 52 per-

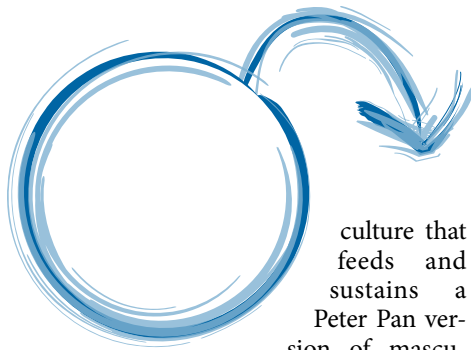
cent between 1992 and 2002. A Radcliffe Public Policy Center report released in 2000 found that 70 percent of men between the ages of 21 to 39 were willing to sacrifice pay and lose promotions in exchange for a work schedule that allowed them to spend more time with their families.

Yet popular culture continues to fetishize the traditional, '50s model of masculinity, but in a distilled form—kick-ass machismo stripped of the accompanying values of honor, duty and loyalty. We seem to have carried with us the unreconstructed sexism of the past—the objectification of women, inability to connect or communicate—but discarded its redeeming virtues. Where traditional masculinity embraced marriage, children and work as rites of passage into manhood, the 21st century version shuns them as emasculating, with the wife cast in the role of the castrating mother. The result resembles a childlike fantasy of manhood that is endowed with the perks of adulthood—money, sex, freedom—but none of its responsibilities.

At least part of this image is rooted in a real cultural trend, according to State University of New York at Stony Brook sociology professor Michael Kimmel. His upcoming book *Guyland* argues that men "are resisting becoming men longer and longer," doing their best to postpone all the decisions that mark the passage into adulthood—getting a job, moving out of their parents' home, getting married, and having kids—in order to enjoy the lad lifestyle of "online porn, drinking, and poker." This trend has its big-screen avatar in the hero of the upcoming *Failure To Launch*, which stars Matthew McConaughey as a thirty-something slacker whose desperate parents "hire the gorgeous and talented girl of his dreams to get him to move out of the house."

More significantly, however, this resistance to adulthood is closely associated with a market-driven consumerist





culture that feeds and sustains a Peter Pan version of masculinity. “To be grown up is to be settled, comfortable, stable, responsible, and secure,” Kimmel says. “Those are bad conditions for advertising, which depends on our sense of insecurity, anxiety, and incompleteness.”

The market also has little time for the old-fashioned male virtue of self-denial, the imperative to do the “right thing” at the expense of pleasure. A stoic John Wayne has been replaced by the “metrosexual,” a man who is all about self-indulgence and defined almost entirely by his wallet. At the beauty salon, designer boutique or exclusive health club, a metrosexual spends, therefore he is.

Susan Faludi foreshadowed the rise of the metrosexual in her 1999 book, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, which describes an “ornamental culture” that tells men “manhood is displayed, not demonstrated. The internal qualities once said to embody manhood—surefootedness, inner strength, confidence of purpose—are merchandised to men to enhance their manliness. What passes for the essence of masculinity is being extracted and bottled and sold back to men. Literally, in the case of Viagra.”

Before it was hijacked by marketing gurus to peddle body lotions and pedicures, British author Mark Simpson coined the word “metrosexual” in 1994 to connote an “epochal shift” to a narcissistic form of mediated masculinity; a man who “has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference.”

Contrary to popular understanding—fueled by conservatives who are fond of caricaturing liberals as well-coiffed and manicured wimps—Simpson does not define the metrosexual as particularly feminine or even gay, but as “a collector of fantasies about the male sold to him by the media.” Thus George W. Bush strut-

ting around on an aircraft carrier is every bit as metrosexual as a teen idol like Orlando Bloom. In a media universe ruled by marketing gods, “the traditional forms and sufferings of stoic, self-denying, self-sacrificing old-fashioned masculinity are merely cutesy, quaint props for the new,

bands Really Think About Their Marriages, Their Wives, Sex, Housework, and Commitment, found, most American men—the flesh-and-blood variety—embrace their roles as fathers and husbands. “I found in my research that the values of duty, honor, and taking responsibil-

Where traditional masculinity embraced marriage, children and work as rites of passage into manhood, the 21st century version shuns them as emasculating.

aestheticised, moisturized self-regarding variety.” In the new millennium, it’s more important to look like a hero than act like one—as John Kerry could well testify.

That this market-driven narcissism finds expression in an adolescent version of masculinity should be no surprise. “In males, narcissism is something that has been associated with immaturity. Classically, it’s something men are supposed to abandon to become adult males,” Simpson says. “Today, consumerism tells all males that ... they never need abandon their narcissism. That they never need grow up. Just so long as they buy the right products.”

This isn’t good news for either men or women. By defining domestic chores literally as “homework,” the teen slacker version of masculinity offers no respite for working women struggling to balance their lives. And if adult responsibilities are defined as emasculating, then it’s no wonder that popular culture now defines “commitment” solely as a woman’s goal.

Domesticity may have always been a feminine realm, but marriage and children were once defined as integral to the traditional gender roles of both men and women. Today, it’s the woman who is cast in the role of caveman, eager to club some unsuspecting, reluctant male on his head and drag him to the altar. While progressives and feminists have rightly championed a woman’s right to reject marriage and motherhood, they rarely address the consequences of living in a culture where pair-bonding and parenting—the basic processes that form the foundation of all societies—are constructed as the antithesis of masculinity.

As Neil Chethik, author of the newly published book *VoiceMale: What Hus-*

bands Really Think About Their Marriages, Their Wives, Sex, Housework, and Commitment, found, most American men—the flesh-and-blood variety—embrace their roles as fathers and husbands. “I found in my research that the values of duty, honor, and taking responsibility are far from forgotten by men in our culture,” Chethik says. “Certainly, most men struggle to fulfill the ideals they set for themselves in this area. But they recognize that being a ‘real man’ requires that they are honest and respectful and willing to sacrifice. I saw this among men who worked at jobs they didn’t love, who took care of an ill spouse or child, who helped in their communities without recognition or compensation. There are millions of such men.”

American men may be doing their best to figure out what it means to be a man in the 21st century, but it’s no accident that these men—and more importantly, their sons—aren’t getting much help from the larger culture. “Consumerism wants to make us as atomized as possible—because the more individualized we are the better consumers we are,” says Simpson. “This is why masculinity is so fragmented today and incoherent—and irresponsible. It used to be the tradition. Literally passed down from father to son. But we live in a society where tradition stands in the way of profit. So bye-bye daddy.”

Discussions of masculinity on both the left and right inevitably circle around women’s equality, either as a curse or boon to men. Where some argue that the women’s movement has freed men from the straightjacket of traditional machismo, others have blamed it for depriving them of their identity. Yet the greatest threat to modern manhood may lie elsewhere—in the flickering images on our television screen, bought and paid for by corporate America. Feminism may have sparked the battle over gender roles, but its outcome may well be determined by market forces determined to make voracious consumers of us all. ■



The sorry gaze of a factory farm commodity.

Meat-Industrial Complex

How factory farms undercut public health

BY MARK WINNE

DRIVE THROUGH DON OPP-LIGER'S Feed Yard in Clovis, New Mexico, and you'll see 35,000 head of beef cattle confined to pens that stretch across the flat, barren landscape.

The constant shuffling of hooves raises a bacteria-laden dust cloud that's carried by the prevailing winds into west Texas, where it joins the plumes of hundreds of other feedlots. At one end of the complex sits a giant lagoon that catches the operation's chemicals, urine, antibiotics and other effluvia. In the narrow strip of land that separates the fencing from the road lie the carcasses of dead cows (a.k.a. "downers"), eyes bugged out, tongues dangling and bellies bloated in the summer heat.

Moving from bovine to porcine, factory hog farms generate an odor so intense it would knock a buzzard off a shit-wagon. In cramped warehouse structures, as many as 20,000 hogs are confined for their entire lives. After five months, the mature hogs are sent off to

the slaughterhouse to have their throats slit and carcasses dipped in chemical vats to loosen their skins. According to Anita Poole, legal counsel for the Oklahoma-based Kerr Center, which has fought that state's takeover by the hog industry, "The average Joe Blow who might stumble into a hog facility would never want to eat pork again."

U.S. shoppers spend less on food as a percentage of their total annual expenditures than anyone else in the world. But this is because factory livestock farms—labeled "concentrated animal feeding operations" (CAFOs) by government agencies—don't pay for the natural resources they have squandered, the farm labor they have maltreated, the declining health of residents who live near their operations, or the animals that have been exploited far beyond their biological capabilities.

Texas County is in Oklahoma's Panhandle region. In 1990 it had 11,000 hogs. Today, according to the Kerr Center, the number has swollen to more than one million. For a region that was in econom-

ic decline, the offer by Seaboard Farms to locate an industrial-style hog operation held out the promise of reinvigorating the flagging economy, creating desperately needed jobs and re-filling the empty school desks.

But it came with a price. Seaboard demanded and received \$60 million in local and state government assistance. This worked out to \$27,552 per new job, a tolerable sum if the jobs paid \$20 per hour, but the average hourly Seaboard wage was less than \$8. In spite of the low wages, the deal might have been justified if the community received a commensurate growth in tax revenues. But by the time the county completed the financing deal with Seaboard, they had agreed to taxes of \$9,700 per year until 2017 on a business site valued at \$100 million. Even after Seaboard agreed to pay \$175,000 annually to the district's school board for the next 25 years, this still amounted to the county forgoing \$120,000 per year.

Factory hog operations not only pay a meager return on a community's investment, they also extract a high price from the surrounding region. With Seaboard's influx of jobs came an increase in population, which in turn brought about a sharp rise in crime. From 1990 to 1997, crime in Texas County increased by 74 percent compared to a 12 percent decline in other rural Oklahoma counties. And factory farm workers in the West and Midwest are increasingly Mexican immigrants, only about half of whom are legally documented. They bring with them a host of needs that these rural communities are unequipped to handle.

But the worst problems are created by the ungodly amount of manure—an estimated 15 million pounds per day in Texas County. Because of water run-off from factory farms, both groundwater and surface water quality have declined. Even worse, the Ogallala Aquifer upon which the region depends for its water is being depleted at a rapid rate. The Oklahoma Water Resource Board reported that water levels in many Texas County wells have dropped 50 to 100 feet over the last 30 years, due in large part to the high water demand of factory hog operations and the irrigated farmland that supports them.

Across the nation, factory farms of all types are wreaking environmental havoc. A 1995 North Carolina manure spill killed 10 million fish and closed 364,000

acres of coastal shellfish beds. In 2004 the Iowa Department of Natural Resources recorded ammonia levels near a hog factory that were six times the recommended health standard. In California's San Joaquin Valley, air pollution from factory dairy farms is a major reason that the region's children have asthma rates three times the national average. In eastern New Mexico—the state's factory dairy farm belt—recent research discovered antibiotic-resistant bacteria in dairy yards. For these reasons, the American Public Health Association has urged all levels of government to impose a moratorium on new CAFOs until a comprehensive environmental and health assessment can be conducted.

Herein lies the rub. The same government and private industry partnership that brought CAFOs to America's marginalized rural communities is highly invested in not just keeping them there, but in seeing them metastasize. Through lax environmental regulations or the under-funding of agencies charged with regulating CAFOs, state governments have fostered CAFO-friendly policies at the public's expense. To further protect their flank, factory farm interests have worked aggressively in state legislatures to restrict the ability of local government to keep CAFOs out of their communities. And just to be sure, New Mexico's dairy

industry considers it an act of "civic duty" for its farmer members to "serve" on local commissions and boards.

The halls of academe have likewise been compromised by CAFO industry "donations" to universities. Rather than use their scientific talents to assess the impact of CAFOs, research faculty are required to solve the industry's problems (e.g., disposing of Himalayan mountains of manure). In 1998, New Mexico State University researcher Stephen Arnold found serious air and water quality problems near dairy operations in southern New Mexico. When the results were released through professional journals and conferences, the dairy industry complained so vehemently to the university that Arnold abandoned his research. And the Kerr Center's Poole reports, "Oklahoma State University won't do community impact research because of all the money they get from the pork industry."

Barely 5 percent of U.S. farms now raise 54 percent of the country's beef and dairy cattle. Corporations now produce 98 percent of all poultry. Small to mid-size family livestock farms are going the way of the dodo. While "local food movements" and a resurgent interest in grass-fed and free-range animal production are gaining traction and deserve our full support, they will never be enough to stem the "blood-dimmed

tide" of the livestock industry.

Are the research reports, the scientific studies, and the occasional manure spill only isolated "factoids" in an otherwise benign landscape of inevitable agricultural modernization? Or is the increasing flow of data and the growing number of incident reports the proverbial canary in a coal mine? A recent World Watch Institute paper pronounced, "Factory Farms are breaking the cycle between small farmers, their animals and the environment, with collateral damage to human health and local communities." And the *Washington Post* reported on North Carolina State University professor C.M. "Mike" Williams, who has spent five years researching how to treat manure from the state's 10 million hogs. He concluded, "I do not feel that system [of factory hog farms] is long-term sustainable."

Dr. Charles Benbrook, a former executive director of the Board of Agriculture for the National Academy of Science, shares Williams' assessment. After years spent studying the dairy industry, Benbrook says he is "perplexed" by the growth of gargantuan dairy farms west of the Mississippi where subsidized water supplies in an otherwise dry landscape have made the expansion of dairy herds feasible—in the short term. In the long term, says Benbrook, further expansion of factory dairy farms "doesn't make sense and is patently unsustainable because water will become too costly, and in not less than five years, but surely no more than 20, the dairy waste stream will overwhelm the absorptive capacity of the local environment."

In other words, our food system may be looking at a doomsday denouement before the middle of this century. It is becoming increasingly certain that the water will run out, the land will no longer absorb the torrent of nutrient waste spread upon it, and the over-bred, antibiotic and hormone-injected animals will eventually succumb to their natural limitations. Poole puts it this way, "The factory system of food production will simply implode." Until the citizens of the heartland rise up in sufficient numbers to hold their government and the corporations accountable, this is both the best and worst we can hope for. ■

MARK WINNE is a freelance writer and consultant who specializes in food, nutrition and agriculture issues. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Lies, Damn Lies and Poverty Statistics

How an archaic measurement keeps millions of poor Americans from being counted

BY CHRISTOPHER MORAFF

STANDING BEFORE THE HOUSE rostrum on the night of January 31, President George W. Bush beamed as he recounted the state of the country's economic health.

"Our economy is healthy," the president declared during his State of the Union address. "Americans should not fear our economic future, because we intend to shape it."

What shape Bush has in mind is clear. While the administrators of the president's economic policies champion 11 consecutive quarters of GDP growth, Bush-mandated tax cuts ensure that the government will continue to make less while the rich and large corporations eagerly fill their coffers. In 2005, federal revenues were just 17.5 percent of GDP, 1 percent less than the previous 50-year average. By contrast, the Feb. 12, 2005 *Economist* reported that in

2004, after-tax corporate profits reached their highest level as a proportion of GDP in 75 years.

In the meantime, everyday Americans are spending more than they make. For the second straight year, personal savings have been in the red, a phenomenon that has only happened once before, at the height of the Great Depression. Research conducted by the Economic Policy Institute shows that the indebtedness of U.S. households has risen nearly 36 percent over the last four years. As a result, the gulf between the "haves" and "have nots" is reaching crisis proportions.

Compounding the crisis is an archaic method for determining America's poverty rate, which is then used to formulate the funding of programs that alleviate poverty. When President Bush sat down with his advisors to draft his FY 2007 budget, it's de-

batable whether he took the time to examine the national poverty statistics provided each year by the Census Bureau. What's not debatable is that the Census Bureau's methodology is woefully inadequate.

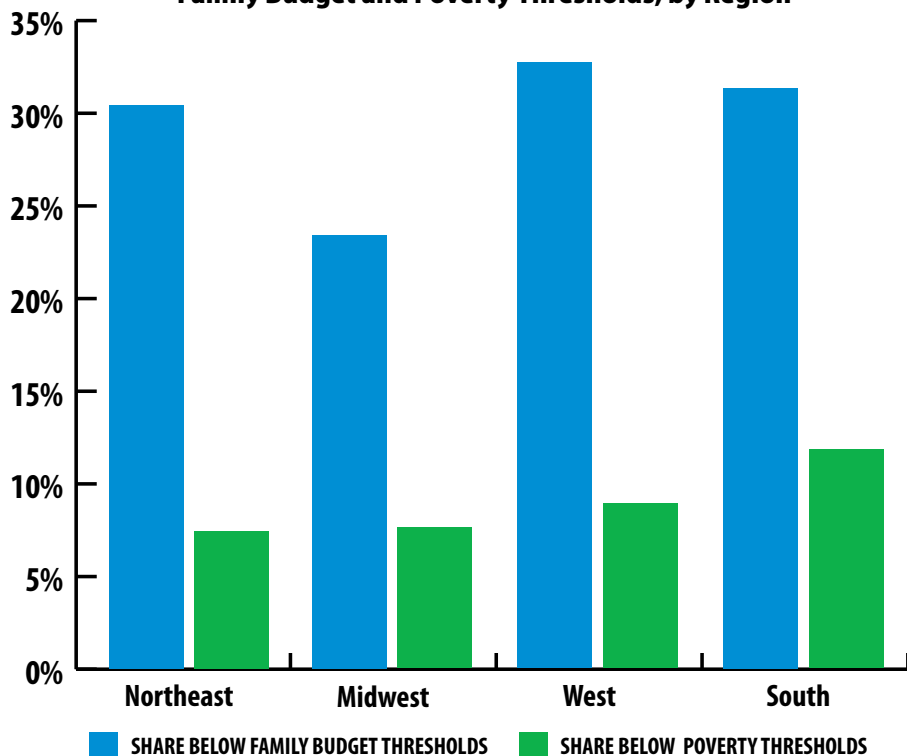
The current method for measuring poverty in the United States was developed in 1963 by a young statistician for the Social Security Administration named Mollie Orshansky. Using data from a 1955 Department of Agriculture survey, Orshansky developed a set of thresholds that set a poverty line at three times the annual cost of feeding a family of three or more under Agriculture's "low-cost budget." She developed the thresholds purely for her own research and said at the time that her data's limitations would yield a "conservative underestimate" of poverty.

At that, Orshansky's work might well have passed into history. But on January 8, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson uttered the famous words: "This Administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America." It was a war Johnson intended to win, but missing was an official yardstick for gauging the problem and its ultimate resolve.

Not just any measure would do. Rather, the administration required a threshold that was sufficiently conservative to render eradication of poverty attainable—winning the war by moving up the finish line. Orshansky's model fit the bill. But first, the Office of Economic Opportunity substituted the Agriculture Department's "economy food plan," which was still another 25 percent lower than the "low cost budget" originally chosen by Orshansky. Almost immediately, the new thresholds had an effect, and by 1968, the nation's official poverty rate had dropped by more than 10 million.

Forty years later, with the War on Poverty no closer to being won, the Census still relies on the Orshansky Thresholds to calculate each year how many Americans live in poverty. That number then determines the nature and distribution of an array of federal policies and programs

Working Families with Incomes Less Than Family Budget and Poverty Thresholds, by Region



ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE (2005)

aimed at addressing the issue.

As critics have pointed out for decades, limitations of the Orshansky formula are manifold. For one, food doesn't account for one-third of a family's budget today, making it an unrealistic cost-of-living measure. The model also fails to take into account housing, transportation or health care—which together can amount to more than triple the average cost of food. Add in regional variations, child-care costs and the growth of single-parent families, and it's fair to say that the Census Bureau is systematically undercounting the number of poor Americans.

Census data released this past August suggests that the number of Americans in poverty grew slightly in 2004 (the most recent year for which data is available) to 12.7 percent from the 12.5 percent recorded the previous year, representing about 37 million Americans. Since 2000, the number of people living in official poverty has increased by 5.4 million. But according to experts, that number vastly underestimates the real total. Duke University sociology professor David Brady puts it this way: "Each August we Americans tell ourselves a lie. The entire epi-

sode is profoundly dishonest."

Brady says that based on his calculations the real number is closer to 18 percent—or 48 million Americans currently unable to afford the most basic necessities. Less conservative estimates have put the numbers of poor at 25 percent, or more than 70 million Americans.

Robert T. Michael, a renowned public policy scholar at the University of Chicago, explains the shortcomings: Orshansky "set a target level of income for a family of four at \$3100 in 1963 based on evidence that she put together that basically was using 1955 data. That exact same number—augmented only by cost of living—is the official measurement of poverty today. If they'd done that at the time of Abraham Lincoln, you know, set a rate something like 100 years before, then we'd have a really low level of poverty today."

What this means in real numbers is that the average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2004 was an annual income of \$19,307. It was \$15,067 for a family of three; \$12,334 for a family of two; and \$9,645 for individuals. "It's really egregiously in error," Michael says.

In 1992, at the prompting of the Joint

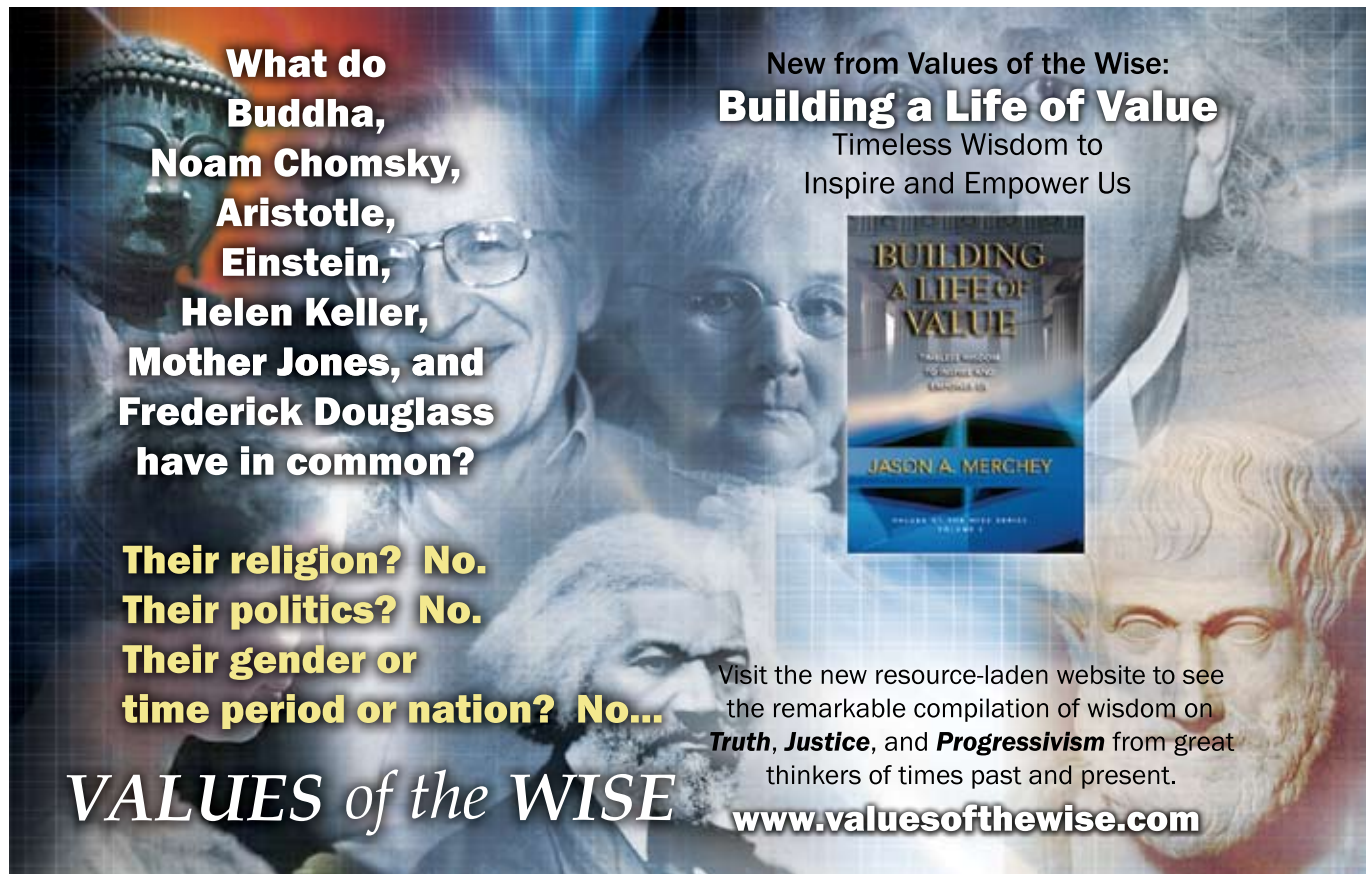
Economic Committee of Congress, the National Academy of Sciences formed a panel to examine the poverty thresholds. Michael was asked to chair the panel.

After three years of work, in 1995 the panel released its report, "Measuring Poverty: A New Approach," which proposed a number of reforms, notably a change to a measure adjusted regionally that takes into account variations in the cost of housing. But nobody in the federal government seemed ready to budge.

"We've gotten some movement and a lot of attention," Michael explains, "but it hasn't changed anything because politicians are politicians." He blames the interests of the states—which have become financially dependent on the status quo—and an unwillingness of any administration to accept such a drastic rise of poverty on their watch.

"If they wanted to change it, it would be pretty easy to do," agrees Brady. "The real reason it hasn't been changed is because of politics." ■

CHRISTOPHER MORAFF is a Philadelphia-based writer and reporter. He most recently covered flaws in the federal procurement system for Entrepreneur Magazine and Dollars & Sense.

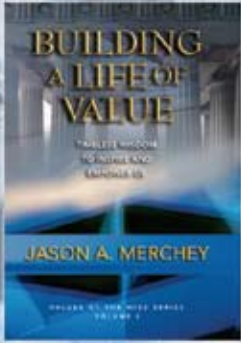


**What do
Buddha,
Noam Chomsky,
Aristotle,
Einstein,
Helen Keller,
Mother Jones, and
Frederick Douglass
have in common?**

**Their religion? No.
Their politics? No.
Their gender or
time period or nation? No...**

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In an Illinois Primary, Three's a Crowd

The race for Henry Hyde's seat raises the question of whether Democrats should fight, keep the faith or grow the grassroots

BY DAVID MOBERG

WITH ITS STEAM TABLES pushed off to the side, the cafeteria of Jackson Middle School in Villa Park, Illinois, didn't look like the setting for great political drama. But it was an early scene in what could be a crucial shift in power favoring the Democrats, both locally and nationally.

This moderately affluent DuPage County suburb west of Chicago, which makes up much of the 6th Congressional District of Illinois, is part of the traditional Republican power center in the state. Since 1975, it has been represented by Henry Hyde, a conservative well-known for his opposition to abortion.

Now Hyde is retiring, and on a Sunday afternoon in late January, three Democratic hopefuls made their case for support in the March primary to an audience of about 80 local party activists. With an open House seat, a hard-right Republican candidate, low ratings for Bush and an increasingly Democratic constituency, the district could help tip the balance of power in the House this fall.

This Democratic primary, however, is not just a contest among the three inexperienced but articulate and progressive individuals at the candidate forum. It also presents a choice among three competing strategies to revive the party's prospects.

The candidate who ran against Hyde two years ago, Christine Cegelis, a 53-year-old information technology consultant, held the incumbent to his lowest winning margin (56-44) since he was first elected. Without significant help from the national party, she built up local party organizations and recruited volunteers. After her defeat, she continued her party-building—reflecting the grassroots revival strategy of the party's national chairman, Howard Dean, who supported her in 2004. Cegelis also claims to bring business skills to the pursuit of progressive goals, and an “everywoman” persona to this well-educated, white-collar, tech-oriented district.

The second candidate to enter the race is Lindy Scott, a 54-year old professor at Wheaton College, one of the country's premier evangelical Christian colleges. Scott, who describes himself as a progressive evangelical, wants to challenge the Republican claim on religious voters and the right's definition of moral values. He defends his largely progressive views, such as withdrawal from Iraq, in the vernacular of both secular policy-making and religious faith. Having worked for many years in Mexico, he also hopes to mobilize the district's growing Latino population—now nearly 12 percent of registered voters, thanks in part to a non-partisan voter registration drive two years ago.

In December, the final candidate entered—Tammy Duckworth, a 37-year-old helicopter pilot from the Iraq war. She had just left Walter Reed hospital, where she had been recovering from a rocket-propelled grenade blast that tore off all of one leg and half of the other and

severely injured one arm. Duckworth, who thought the war was a mistake but felt that she had to be there with her unit, is a prime representative of the “fighting Dems” strategy championed by some bloggers and consultants.

More than 50 veterans are running for Congress as Democrats. Duckworth is one of the nine who are veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Strategists hope these candidates bring national security credentials that will help them challenge the Republican strategy of running on war and terrorism, and painting detractors as cowards—an approach that Karl Rove made clear in January with his attack on Democrats as the party of “cut and run” in Iraq.

There were only two major differences at the forum among the candidates, who all take generally liberal positions, such as support for better funding of education at all levels, universal health care (ultimately involving single-payer health insurance), technology investment and



PHOTO COURTESY OF DUCKWORTH FOR CONGRESS

more progressive taxes.

Scott, who belongs to Democrats for Life but supports *Roe v. Wade*, wants to “reframe” the abortion debate by empowering women with widespread child care and insurance coverage for both contraceptives and the costs of pregnancy. Both Duckworth and Cegelis identify themselves as pro-choice, but Duckworth in particular tries to encompass abortion within broader privacy rights.

And while all three harshly criticize Bush for going to war in Iraq and bungling its conduct, Scott and Cegelis call for a clear timetable for withdrawal of all troops. Duckworth advocates accelerated training of Iraqis, then withdrawing a unit of U.S. troops as each new Iraqi unit is ready.

The DCCC steps in

But beneath the broad policy agreements, there is smoldering conflict over how national party leaders have become involved in the race.

Chicago presents a key opportunity for the party, as its suburbs are growing more open to Democrats, demonstrated by Melissa Bean’s defeat of long-time Republican Rep. Phil Crane in an adjacent northwestern suburburban district two years ago. Democratic analysts note that the 6th Congressional District now includes more immigrants, more young families and more social moderates.

Despite Cegelis’ showing two years ago, skeptics argue that she should have done better, given the performance in the district by both John Kerry and Barack Obama. “It seemed an inept operation for what you’d need in an uphill battle in a Republican district,” veteran political strategist Don Rose says.

But she did inspire many local activists. “Her organization was very strong,” argues Doug Cole, chair of one of the township organizations within the DuPage County Democratic Party that is endorsing no one in the primary. “There’s a lot of lingering support because she was so strong in the precincts.” Cegelis’ record has also drawn support from some grassroots groups, such as Progressive Democrats of America—the group’s national deputy director is on leave to serve as her campaign chair—and Democracy For America, a spin-off of the 2004 Dean campaign.

All last year, however, Chicago Rep. Rahm Emanuel, chair of the Democrat-

ic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), was searching for an alternative to Cegelis, especially a rich, self-financing candidate. The DCCC, which is formally independent of the Democratic National Committee, recruits and raises funds for Democratic House candidates.

Then, Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin met

While many local activists hold nothing against Tammy Duckworth personally, they resent the ‘heavy-handed meddling by the DCCC and Rahm Emanuel.’

Duckworth in the hospital and was impressed with her, eventually urging her to run. Within a short time, Duckworth had endorsements from Illinois progressive luminaries like Obama and Rep. Jan Schakowsky and from the AFL-CIO, AFSCME (public employees), Service Employees, Teachers and other unions, as well as the statewide Citizen Action Coalition. In two weeks, she pulled to the front of the campaign in fundraising.

Duckworth is a “very compelling, smart, sincere and solid,” says AFSCME political director John Cameron. “Now she’s going to run with Durbin, Obama, Schakowsky and Emanuel support. They do one mailing, and they’ll win the primary.” Even some party activists who leaned to the other candidates are now tilting to Duckworth because they believe she has a better chance of winning in November.

But a lot of resentment remains. “We felt [Duckworth’s entry] was heavy-handed meddling by the DCCC and Rahm Emanuel to try to intervene in the grassroots politics of DuPage county,” Cole says. “Everything they do drips with centralized arrogance and is as autocratic as any ensemble of Republicans.” *Christian Century* Senior Contributing Editor Jim Wall, a former Democratic congressional candidate and state central committeeman from the area, is supporting Cegelis and thinks voters will resist both Scott’s direct religious appeal and Emanuel’s outside intervention.

Cegelis, who says she originally ran because she feared the prospects for the next generation were declining, accepts the competition but felt surprised and frustrated by party leaders’ intercession. “That was a real shocker to me,” she says.

Even many Duckworth supporters have regrets. “Frankly, I don’t think it was handled all that well,” says David Axelrod, Duckworth’s media consultant and a leading national Democratic strategist. “But we have serious, serious challenges in this country. The choices are as stark as any in my lifetime.”

Despite her inexperience, many peo-

ple find Duckworth charismatic and engaging. Her story is compelling and readily brought to mind as she walks, with the help of a cane, on her new titanium legs.

Although some activists question the potency of Duckworth’s veteran status in an affluent district with few military ties, Duckworth told *In These Times*, “My experience will help voters vote on the issues that most concern them. They won’t fall for the GOP strategy that you aren’t a patriot if you don’t vote for invading Iraq ... I believe in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. I was willing to defend it with my body.”

But the “fighting Dems” strategy didn’t work for Kerry, and poster boy Paul Hackett ultimately lost in his Ohio special Congressional election and has now withdrawn from the Ohio U.S. Senate primary under pressure from party leaders.

Still, the Republican candidate, state Sen. Peter Roskam, is vulnerable. A politician noted for his mean streak, he’s an extreme right-winger on many social issues and was mentored by indicted former House majority leader Tom DeLay. “It’s an exciting prospect,” says one Duckworth backer, “having a first-class candidate with progressive politics running against a right-wing toad.”

But first, Duckworth has to win the primary. Cegelis and Scott have significant strengths, both as individuals and in terms of the constituencies that may be mobilized by their strategies.

Whoever wins, Democrats in the district are hoping that they will be playing their parts in a grand drama that will ultimately end the monolithic Republican grip on power in Washington. ■

General Condemnation

BY GEORGE KENNEY

Retired Lieutenant General William Odom was the director of the National Security Agency between 1985 and 1988. Currently a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and a professor at Yale University, Odom has been an outspoken critic of the Bush administration's foreign policy.

You've described Iraq as the greatest strategic mistake that the United States has ever made. Could you elaborate on that?

A shorthand way is to reflect on what happened to the Hapsburg Empire. There is an analogy here with bin Laden and 9/11 and his taking refuge in Afghanistan. I think invading Afghanistan made some sense because we were going after the culprit. But when we went into Iraq, we were invading a country that didn't have anything to do with 9/11. This has set in motion some of the same kind of consequences that the Hapsburgs set in motion by their ultimatum to Serbia, which started World War I and led to their own destruction.

Rather than losing the United States as an empire, what we're doing is losing Europe. In other words, we're essentially destroying NATO. And NATO has provided a supra-national-political-military substitute for government in Europe, which has allowed the longest period of peace and prosperity in the history of Europe. Whether that can continue without NATO or without a strong U.S.-European connection through formal institutions is most doubtful.

So we would essentially be destroying this international system.

Absolutely, but what we are destroying is not a territorial empire, it is an ideological empire. The ideology's not democracy; it's liberalism with a capital L.

Liberal countries are countries that have constitutions. They brought the state under control. They limit the power of the state, they make it the honest referee. Those countries have always become democratic in their decision-making procedures, but countries that become democratic without first having a solid constitutional agreement almost never turn out to be liberal.

And unlike previous empires, countries have generally fought to get in this one, not to get out.

Remember that in the fall of 2001, the U.S. had over 90 countries participating in five sub-coalitions in the anti-terrorism coalition. We never have had so much international support in our history. And we had NATO, without any urging, invoking Article 5 of the treaty saying that bin Laden's attack on the United States was an attack on them.

U.S. international support began to erode only when the president announced the "Axis of Evil" in January 2002. And I remember being confused as to what the Europeans were talking about until I heard a couple of senior diplomats—deputy chiefs of mission of major NATO countries—saying, "We signed up to fight al-Qaeda, and when we heard the president's speech, he was asking us to declare war on Iraq, Iran, North Korea."

They didn't sign up for that, and they weren't even asked. And then the president marches on, acting as if Europeans

were fools because they didn't sign up for the war, as if they were out of place to question whether they should even be consulted.

A lot of people have talked about the reasons why we made the mistake of going into Vietnam. It's harder to get a handle on why we made the mistake in Iraq. How do we find out what the reasons were?

Only thing we could do is ask Mr. Bush. It seems to me that it's pretty hard to imagine us going into Iraq without the strong lobbying efforts from AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee] and the neocons, who think they know what's good for Israel more than Israel knows. The invisible elephant in the room on this issue is the Israeli factor. People don't like to talk about it. Now that we're in there, we're getting to realize that the war is creating far more dangers for Israeli security than it's provided improvements for Israeli security.

I think you're going to see a Shiite Islamic regime in at least a large part of Iraq and it's going to cooperate with Iran, and Iran with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and that will create all kinds of trouble for Israel.

It's a lot of hubris, a lot of intellectual arrogance, on the part of neocons who think they know what's better for everybody else.

So put that all aside. The most important thing to remember is to go back and use the Vietnam example. Our failure after 1964, after the Gulf of Tonkin, when we decided to increase the troop levels, was not to ask the question, again and again, what was our strategic purpose in Vietnam and did it make any sense.

I remember that James Graham, who was the CIA's Asia guy, also argued against the war until Kissinger finally forced him out. So, the agency wasn't



**William Odom, former
director of the National
Security Agency**

on board for that war either.

To blame the intelligence community is a big mistake. Intelligence communities are not free. They're hired agents for a particular administration, which picks their leaders. Take this analogy from the corporate world: Have you ever heard of a board of directors firing a vice president for marketing? No, corporate boards fire the CEO because it's the CEO's job to hire the vice president for marketing. So if the Congress is so upset with the CIA's performance on the war, they should impeach the president.

Is there much chance in your view that the Congress is going to weigh in on Iraq or on the possibility of further confrontations with Iran anytime soon?

The Iraq issue will come back because it's just going to get worse. The administration may find some cover to cut and run. I would not be surprised to see in a few months, when the Shiites are pretty well ensconced in the government, they may just say it's time for you fellas to leave.

Which would be great.

It would be great in the sense of not staying longer, but then we would be

facing the strategic ramifications for Iraq and the region, which we are going to have to face sooner or later anyways. And that is that we have actually put in the driver's seat a country whom we have defined arbitrarily as one of our worst enemies, Iran.

There is a knee-jerk tendency to say, "Well, if we left, it would be a mess. Therefore, we can't leave." That requires blinding oneself to the fact—the reality—that our presence is creating the mess, that we don't keep a mess from happening by staying, and that we don't have the alternative of not creating a mess. When we crossed the border of Iraq with the invasion, all these untoward outcomes were inexorably going to happen.

From the beginning I was unambiguously against this war. I said that the U.S. invasion of Iraq is not in our interest, it is in the interest of al-Qaeda and the interest of Iran.

Have people come back to you to say, "General Odom, you were right?"

It's not anything particularly brilliant on my part. We have all been made to put up with this preposterous illusion. It's like somebody telling you, "There's no cloud

in the sky today." And when you look up and can't see the sun, you say, "You know, I don't see the sun." It doesn't take a lot of insight to point out that there's no sunshine up there.

It seems like there are a lot of dishonest people making policy so we're left to figure out how to deal with that. People see these statements coming out of Washington and think, "Well, my gosh, how do I make sense of that?"

The sad thing to me in that regard is that the Democrats gave the public virtually no real choice in the last election. So I'm not terribly surprised at the way it came out, but I don't think it really reflects where the public stands on the war in Iraq. I've given up on the Democrats. I think the best hope right now, for the next election, is to find a Republican who will say that the war is a mistake strategically and then get out.

There was an article in *Der Spiegel* saying American emissaries had been trying to convince the Germans and Turks and so forth to prepare for some kind of assault on Iran. Do you see any realistic chance that we are now going to start confronting Iran?

I would have, in the past, said it's almost too ridiculous to take seriously. But given this administration's record, I'm reluctant to rule it out.

You can look at this and make a very strong case that by naming the "Axis of Evil" and invading Iraq, we have actually strengthened North Korea and strengthened Iran. They'll both end up with nuclear weapons, whereas they might not have if we hadn't done this. If you had a good reason to invade Iraq, and I don't think we did, you shouldn't have lumped Iraq together with Iran as enemies until after you had achieved what you wanted to achieve in Iraq. Surely you don't want two enemies out there. Why not have Iraq's other enemy, Iran, on your side? ■

GEORGE KENNEY, a U.S. diplomat during the first Bush administration, resigned in 1991 over U.S. policy towards the Yugoslav conflict. He is now a writer in Washington. This interview is adapted from a podcast on www.electricpolitics.com.



BY DOUG IRELAND

The Lies of Bernard-Henri Lévy

Bernard-Henri Lévy is so ubiquitous in France's media that he is universally referred to as BHL. But in Parisian intellectual and journalistic circles he is known by the moniker BHV—the French department store that sells anything and everything.

BHL had hoped to sell himself to the United States with *American Vertigo*, in which he travels the United States “in the footsteps of Tocqueville.” No one is buying.

American Vertigo reminds me of that old movie, *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium*, about American tourists hip-hopping Europe in great haste. BHL's account of his lightening-quick stops in various parts of the country—chauffeur and translator in tow—is receiving universally bad reviews, especially in the cities he visited, whose local newspapers have made a sport out of pointing out how he got it

wrong. Meanwhile, the book's bric-a-brac of dime-store observations has been widely ridiculed. In the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*, Garrison Keillor skewered BHL for “the grandiosity of a college sophomore, a student padding out a term paper,” adding, “There's no reason for [the book] to exist in English, except as evidence that travel need not be broadening.” Enough said.

Two French journalists—Nicolas Beau of *Le Canard Enchaîné* and Olivier Toscer of *Le Nouvel Observateur*—have just published in Paris *Une Imposture Française* (A French Imposter), an inquest into how

BHL has built his success. They write:

A philosopher who's never taught the subject in any university, a journalist who creates a cocktail mingling the true, the possible, and the totally false, a patch-work filmmaker, a writer without a real literary oeuvre, he is the icon of a media-driven society in which simple appearance weighs more than the substance of things. BHL is thus first and foremost a great communicator, the PR man of the only product he really knows how to sell: himself.

The flaws in BHL's work have been evident from the beginning. His third book, the 1979 *Le Testament de Dieu*, was shot down in flames by Hellenist historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet (a moral leader of the French left) in a famous *Nouvel Observateur* article that detailed BHL's numerous errors. To take just two, BHL cited texts he claimed were from the decline of the Roman Empire (fourth century) which were actually from the first century B.C., and cited Heinrich Himmler's "deposition" at the Nuremberg trials, which opened six months after the SS leader's suicide. Interviewed 20 years later by Jade Lindgaard and Xavier de la Porte, the authors of *Le B.A. BA du BHL (The ABCs of BHL)*, Vidal-Naquet said sadly, "We have passed from the Republic of Letters into the non-Republic of Media. I thought I had 'killed' BHL. I hadn't. I consider that a defeat."

From the giant publishing house of Grasset—where BHL has been an editor since 1973—he launched his first media operation: the creation of the "*nouveaux philosophes*," a band of scribblers of whom he was the most visible, whose leitmotif was anti-Marxism, anti-Communism, anti-anti-Americanism, and the embrace of the free market as guarantor of human well-being. Their books championed monotheism and anti-ideology as the only possible response to the moral collapse of Communism, thus fostering depoliticization in the wake of the evaporation of the "spirit of May 1968" and the triumph of consumer culture.

BHL launched his second book, *Barbarism with a Human Face*, from the platform of the high-rated, prime-time literary talk show, "Apostrophes." A handsome dandy, with studiously coiffed long hair, and a white shirt carefully unbuttoned to reveal his tanned chest, BHL caused the

TV host's daughter to tell him afterward, "I have seen Rimbaud on television!"

That unbuttoned white shirt, by the way, is an important element of BHL's TV and public images and it tells a lot about the man. If you tried it with your own shirt, the collar would sag. But BHL's shirts are specially designed by the famous shirt-maker Charvet, with collars that withstand the unbuttoning and nev-

young Franco-Arabs and blacks. *Une Imposture Francaise*, however, reveals that the group was only a media-driven vote-getting mechanism for Mitterrand that was completely created by the Elysée Palace (France's White House). He also helped launch the monthly magazine *Globe*, designed to be a media arm of Mitterrandian propaganda, in which BHL's column was featured on the front

Concerning Lévy's success, the Hellenist historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet notes, 'We have passed from the Republic of Letters into the non-Republic of Media.'

er disappear under his jacket. The effect costs some \$400 apiece, but BHL is a very rich man. The business magazine *Capital* recently named him one of the 100 richest people in France.

Born with a silver *cuillère* in his mouth, BHL inherited the family's huge lumber business, Becob. He played a major role in running the company, until it was sold in the early '90s. The company specialized in rare woods from Africa and—as *Une Imposture Francaise* reveals—while BHL was running the company, numerous international bodies and a report from the Canadian government denounced it for keeping its African workers in penurious semi-slavery, which rather contradicts BHL's pretensions to be an international humanitarian activist.

The book also describes BHL's shady stock market speculations, his being questioned by the authorities about insider trading and the secret shell companies he owns in France, Switzerland, England and America, and his troubles with the taxman over undeclared revenue that led to a recommended indictment. Before it could be executed, the indictment was quashed by one of BHL's new-found conservative friends, the then-Minister of Finances, Nicolas Sarkozy, the rising star of the right. Sarkozy is only one of the many politicians BHL has cultivated, by praising him in print while also commissioning Sarkozy to write a book for Grasset—a favorite BHL ploy for seducing everyone from TV hosts to literary critics.

BHL changes his political allegiances like one of his shirts. A courtier of François Mitterrand, BHL supported his presidency by helping create SOS Racism, ostensibly a civil rights group for

page of every issue.

BHL was rewarded for these efforts with the chairmanship of the government commission that provides subsidies to French cinema. BHL used this post, which has life-or-death power over French films, to finance his own failed cinematic creations as well as movies starring his glitzy trophy wife, the actress Arielle Dombasle. But, when he sensed that Mitterrand's star was fading, he began cozying up to and promoting the conservatives' Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur—and was soon rewarded with the presidency of the state-owned TV network Arté, where he continued using taxpayers' monies to subsidize his own productions, those of his friends and, of course, projects featuring Dombasle.

BHL's fatuous intellect was on full display in the Feb. 27 issue of *The Nation*, when he wrote "a number of progressives needed, by their own admission, to wait for Hurricane Katrina before they got indignant about, or even learned about, the sheer scale of the outrageous poverty blighting American cities." BHL had no need to wait for Katrina; he predicted her arrival.

In an interview with *New York* magazine, BHL claimed his American "trip was under three shadows ... The shadow of the war in Iraq, the shadow of an election, and the shadow of Katrina." When the interviewer pointed out that Katrina "hadn't struck at the time he wrote the book," BHL simply pirouetted: "The anticipated shadow of Katrina. I was in New Orleans four or five months before Katrina, and I more or less foresee what is going to happen." As BHL likes to say dismissively when caught in a falsehood, "Ah, but the ink dries so fast ..."

This incredible statement, however,

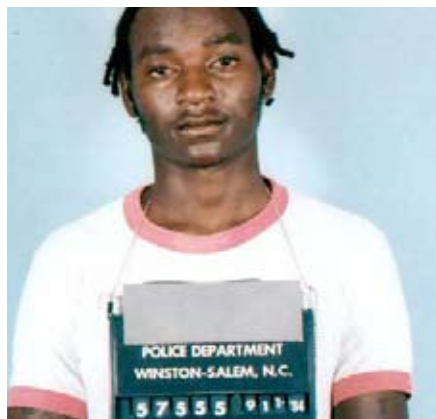
proves the accuracy of the judgment rendered on BHL by Mariane Pearl, wife of the subject of BHL's last book in English, the hallucinatory and factually nonsensical *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* Says the disillusioned Mrs. Pearl, BHL is "a man whose ego destroys his intelligence." Those are *les mots justes*. ■

DOUG IRELAND, an *In These Times* contributing editor, can be reached through his blog, *DIRELAND*, at <http://direland.typepad.com/direland/>.



This Film Is Not Yet Rated

Political outrage skipped merrily through the generations. On one end was Haskell Wexler, the renowned cinematographer who started filming in the '40s with Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz, and who's still working (recently on John Sayles' *Silver City*). Wexler's *Who Needs Sleep?* explores the ever-lengthening hours of Hollywood film shoots. Made over the eight years since a cameraman died on the road after an overlong day, the film indicts an industry and implicates many others.



The Trials of Darryl Hunt

their vote is being disenfranchised exactly because it's so valuable, and to mobilize the black vote next time around." The film won a special jury prize.

Many docs were designed for organizing. Patricia Foulkrod's *The Ground Truth* (thegroundtruth.com) shows us young soldiers whose ideals are betrayed by a war they cannot support and by the failures of postwar care. Their stories are interwoven with Foulkrod's horrifying photographs and video of the Iraq war. "I



Iraq in Fragments

FILM

Sundance Docs 2006

By Pat Aufderheide

HAVE THE MARKETPLACE successes of Michael Moore (*Fahrenheit 9/11*) and Robert Greenwald (*Outfoxed*, *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*) changed the chances for documentary films? If Sundance this year was any guide, yes. The trend-spotting festival was bolder than usual in showcasing politically-charged films.

This was a year when, along with Paris Hilton and John Waters, Al Gore counted as a Sundance celeb. He was everywhere, including a lead role in *An Inconvenient Truth*, a film by Davis Guggenheim which showcases Gore's shocking and authoritative slide show on global warming. The documentary was produced by Hollywood's Participant Productions, the new social-conscience production company fueled by Jeff Skoll's dotcom wealth, which made *Syriana* and *Good Night and Good Luck*. The company also premiered *The World According to Sesame Street*, an endearing look at the show's international work.

The film business, which in Wexler's youth expected eight-hour days, now works location workers so long that they are mobilizing to fight for a 14-hour day. Although IATSE (the industry union) members have voted unanimously to address the issue of fatigue, notoriously corrupt union bosses refuse to take it up. In fact, everywhere Wexler goes—his local, the national, OSHA—he finds a shrug. So it's back to DIY. The film is designed to spur people to organize, and he's optimistic: "I worked with Spanish Republicans in the '30s. I had my passport taken away in the '50s. I've seen it all and it's turning around."

At the other end of the age spectrum is baby-faced Ian Inaba, who improbably started out as an investment banker and, felled by the dotcom bust, has gone on to co-create an Internet TV news channel, Guerrilla News Network (guerrillanews.com). His *American Blackout* is a gutsy retelling of electoral outrages that stifled African Americans' ability to vote in the 2000 election, and Rep. Cynthia McKinney's (D-Ga.) 2004 victory, which rested on the African-American turnout. "I got fascinated with how mainstream media were participating in the censorship of dissent," Inaba says. "We want to show black voters that

want everybody to see it, so our soldiers are not just left hanging when they come back," she says. Foulkrod hopes to borrow from Robert Greenwald's success with grassroots distribution once the Sundance deals are cut.

Byron Hurt's *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* is a gutsy critique of a hip-hop culture that has gone, in Hurt's short lifetime, from critical of oppression to oppressive in its violent caricature of gender roles. He takes his questions about the now-endemic thuggery to hip-hop artists, fans, and eventually the business. Most hip-hop sells to whites, he discovers, and record companies encourage the worst stereotypes. Ultimately, he says, black men have to take responsibility for the art they're creating. Hurt, a long-time hip-hop fan and anti-sexism activist, is taking his film to kids throughout the nation before it airs on public TV's "Independent Lens" series.

One filmmaker decided to take on the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)—the people who bring us the movie ratings and who label all copying "piracy." *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, by smart and funny Kirby Dick, charges the MPAA with censorship by ratings, moti-

vated among other things by favoritism (big studios above indies) and anti-gay sentiment. During the fest, the MPAA was caught red-handed making, ahem, unauthorized copies of Dick's film. When asked about it, the filmmaker just laughed.

I'm betting you'll see at least some of the fest's high-quality social issue docs on television and even in theaters soon. One likely choice is *Iraq in Fragments*—which won directing, cinematography and editing prizes. James Longley (*Gaza Strip*) gives us three vignettes from the Iraq he experienced between 2003 and 2005. Not a moment from these Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish daily lives is familiar from U.S. news programs, and it's all eye-opening. Longley plans to work with human rights organizations to get the film out as well as strike a distribution deal.

Already scheduled is *A Lion in the House*, a two-parter that follows several children with cancer for six years: It will be part of the Independent Television Service series "Independent Lens." (Sundancers were horrified to hear that Julia Reichert, the co-director, had to leave the festival after

a call from her own doctor confirming a cancer diagnosis.) Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg's *The Trials of Darryl Hunt*, about a false conviction overturned after two decades of unflagging community pressure, will show up on HBO.

In *Clear Cut*, Peter Richardson goes back to Philomath, his Oregon hometown, where the local business of timber is ceding to tourism. There, a culturally conservative foundation head—whose foundation has paid college tuition for all high school graduates for decades—precipitates a conflict that rips the town apart. Swiss documentarian Heidi Specogna creates a superb miniature of globalization in *The Short Life of José Antonio Gutierrez*. Gutierrez, a Guatemalan undocumented immigrant, was one of the first soldiers to die in Iraq.

The slogan of Participant Productions—"changing the world one story at a time"—could have been the slogan of Sundance docs this year. And with grassroots and viral marketing catching on, many of them will work on that soon after their debut. ■

POP CULTURE

Dear Postindustrial Capitalism

By Jessica Clark

CAN I RESIGN as the CEO of Brand Me, Inc? While profits and productivity are up, and product recognition is on the rise, the worker is complaining of long hours, tension headaches and job insecurity. Please advise.

Since early January, to the horror of my inner artist, slacker and cynic, my "inner executive" has been consulting a personal productivity advisor. David Allen, the mastermind behind *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, which recently hit No. 1 on the *Business Week* paperback bestseller list. Allen sports a tie and wire-rimmed glasses, and spouts a brand of management-speak that would set most lefties' teeth on edge. Yet, his hippie past peeks through—Allen defines the goal of implementing his persnickety efficiency

[art space]



The Land and Globalization Poster and Newspaper Series

is the new campaign by the Street Art Workers (SAW), a group of graffiti artists, designers, printmakers and stencil artists whose posters reclaim the streets for art and activism.

The series, composed of artists from 10 countries and 20 cities, examines how corporate globalization has affected rural and urban workers throughout the world, and how those workers are responding. Previous SAW campaigns have explored prison issues, mass media and utopic visions of the future.

For more information, visit www.streetartworkers.org.



tactics as achieving a “mind like water.”

To help you reach that crystalline consciousness, GTD (as the book is known to acolytes) employs a bottom-up approach to dealing with all the junk that’s bugging you now—the crap on your desk, the nagging voices in your head, your closet clutter and your unrealized ambitions. Each of these unprocessed items, says Allen, represents an “open loop,” a commitment that your unconscious will hound you about until you record or reckon with it.

Once collected, this crud must be molded and sorted into categories: “trash” (the most satisfying), “reference” (sort of soothing) and “projects” broken down into “actionable items” sorted by “contexts” like home, office or phone. Allen then prompts devotees to review this project list—the backbone of the system—each week. Performed religiously, this routine transforms an adrenaline-fueled daily grind into a game of strategy that reformats dead time into do-time. By emptying your “psychic RAM” into this system, Allen argues, you free your mind for creative thought and arm yourself for rapid response to the changing exigencies of life.

With clients ranging from the U.S. Air Force to Lockheed Martin to the American Red Cross, Allen has hit it big in the business-consulting world. He’s also attracted a slew of less-conventional followers. The self-proclaimed “geek” world is enraptured by GTD; cult metaphors abound in the dozens of blogs, Wikis and software projects devoted to dissecting each phase of his method (check out <http://del.icio.us/tag/gtd> for a sampling). Wired writer Robert Andrews calls *Getting Things Done*, first published in 2001, a “holy book for the information age,” while blogger Anil Dash praises Allen for delivering an “aspirational digital lifestyle.” The GTD-infused word “lifehack” has become so popular that the editors of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* selected it as a runner-up for the 2005 Word of the Year.

Why has GTD generated such adulation? Merlin Mann, whose blog “43 Folders” has become a hub for the GTD community, provides some insight.

“Geeks are often disorganized or have

a twisted skein of attention deficit disorders,” he writes. They also “crave actionable items and roll their eyes at ‘mission statements’ and lofty management patois,” and “have too many projects and lots and lots of stuff.” Sound familiar?

It should. In many ways, “geeks” are the canaries in the New Economy’s coalmine. Programmers and knowledge workers often operate as free agents in the digital economy—self-employed or contract workers with little job security and a constant need to reinvent themselves for new employers. Working at home or remotely, they are overwhelmed by a barrage of e-mails and media inputs, lack the structure and community provided by conventional offices, and must erect or erase hard boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Such a vacuum of external supports and structures means that such workers must find new systems for setting goals, defining next steps, and managing the “project” of life.

In 1950, sociologist David Reisman noted a major cultural shift in his influential book, *The Lonely Crowd*. He argues that over the years, Westerners’ social character has gone through three stages: the tradition-driven mode of the pre-modern era, the “inner-directed” style associated with industrialists and pioneers, and the mass-society “other-directedness” of the peer-driven consumer and office worker. GTD is a system that supports the emergence of yet a new character—what one might term the “self-directed” global creative.

Increasingly missed by social safety nets, unbound from traditional familial and cultural ties, atomized by free-market philosophies and awash in a sea of

niche-defined consumer and lifestyle choices, the “self-directed” are wracked with anxiety. GTD supplants what Reisman described as the “gyroscope” of the inner-directed—an internalized set of values inculcated by society—with an inner index of individualized choices, projects and goals. This portfolio can then travel with you across jobs, cities, families, subcultures and life stages, absorbing anxiety along the way.

As Allen puts it, GTD trains your “inner committee”—providing “organization development from the inside out.”

Now, usually, at this point in a progressive critique of a business book, my inner satirist would be mocking Allen and his readers as bourgeois, work-obsessed drones lacking the requisite class consciousness to understand their plight. But such a critique is both facile and unimaginative.

The personal empowerment genre does present real dangers, as NYU sociologist Micki McGee points out in her recent book, *Self-Help, Inc.* “The capitalist demand is that one ‘be all one can be’: human capital, as with any other natural resource, is to be developed and exploited,” she writes. Yet, at the same time she continues, “The democratic demand—and promise—is that one will get to ‘be all one can be’: a human being reaching his or her greatest potential in association with others.” She goes on to note:

If one imagines self-help culture not only as a means of social control but also as a symptom of social unrest that has not found a political context, then, given the exponential growth of self-help reading, there is no shortage of unrest or dissatisfaction. Understood in these terms, self-help culture could potentially offer an enormous opportunity for cultivating social change.

It is this promise that attracts me to GTD, and to helpful and optimistic lifehackers like Mann



and Ethan J. A. Schoonover, a freelance photographer and global gadabout who has come up with his own GTD twist at kinkless.com. While Allen's system might read like a hybrid of soulless corporate disciplines like Total Quality Management and the deracinated Zen of stress-management retreats, it is surprisingly effective, and often fun. As a recent article in the *Guardian* notes, the initial "mind sweep" of projects "can be both traumatic and oddly liberating."

These are tools not just for creating new ways to work, but for carving out time for leisure, action and reflection. As a self-proclaimed geek who straddles two increasingly volatile and insecure vocations—journalism and progressive politics—how can I resist? And then, there's the lure: "mind like water."

"Before GTD I used to have a really hard time getting to sleep," says Schoonover. "My head would hit the pillow and my brain would start cycling through all these ideas. With GTD I do a *much* better job of capturing ideas as they come to me throughout the day. The improvement in sleep alone is worth the price of admission." ■

BOOKS

Party of One

By David Moberg

DURING THE DEBATE OVER NAFTA more than a decade ago, a corporate lobbyist tried to persuade Jeff Faux, founder of the progressive Economic Policy Institute, that he should support the deal. Mexican President Carlos Salinas was "one of us," the lobbyist said. At first Faux didn't understand who the "us" was. Then, he realized, "Despite the considerable political and social distance between Carlos Salinas and me, she was appealing to class solidarity."

"At that moment," Faux writes, "I realized that globalization was producing not just a borderless market, but a borderless class system to go with it."

This is not some shadowy conspiracy. In his new book, *The Global Class War*, Faux describes the formation of a global elite of political, business, media and academic figures, who often attend the same schools, work directly or indirectly for the same multinational corporations and move in the same social circles. Even if they are from much different countries, they often have common

interests. And their common interests are frequently different from—even antagonistic to—the interests of both their individual nations and the vast majority of the population.

All markets need rules that determine who gets what, and the creation of those rules is a political question. This global elite has tried to create those rules through a series of what are misleadingly called "trade agreements," like NAFTA or the World Trade Organization treaty. Members of this elite secretively draw up these agreements and approve them despite widespread popular opposition. There are two main objectives, Faux writes, to secure the rights of global corporations and to restrain the options of governments to manage their economies.

National elites disagree over specific policies, such as the sale of genetically modified food that divides the United States and the European Union. (The World Trade Organization recently ruled in favor of the United States.) But that's no different from the conflicts between competing transnational corporations. When it comes to essential matters, however, Faux argues that they demonstrate remarkable global class solidarity. And in this emerging politics of the global econ-

spin cycle

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE

Move Over, Tim Russert

Are you: a) A political news junkie? b) Constantly surfing political blogs? c) An activist seeking a national audience?

Now there's a political news network just for you—but not on your TV. Go online and load up Politics TV (www.politicstv.com). Officially launching March 7, this progressive online TV network will provide daily news delivered with a satirical edge; DSPAN, a progressive version of CSPAN that allows nonprofits and think tanks to submit videotapes of their events, and the Candidate Channel, which will

feature video commentaries by candidates running for local, state and federal office.

Politics TV is not just about the news viewers can watch, but about news viewers can produce. On the soon-to-be-launched Satire Channel, PTV viewers can submit flash cartoons, sketch comedy, and other humorous content.

Over the next few months, Politics TV will also roll out the Pundit Channel, which is billed as "the American Idol of political talk shows." Politics TV producers will travel the country looking for the best "pundits" in cities across the country.

Politics TV's Executive

Producer David Mannett puts it this way: "Politics TV is the continuation of the democratization of media. Blogs have leveled the playing field for print media and journalism. Internet TV is going to take on conventional broadcast and news TV."

20 years of FAIR-ness

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) celebrates its 20-year anniversary in 2006, and the media monitoring group is taking a look back at its accomplishments in the January/February issue of *Extra!*, the group's bimonthly magazine. Throughout the years, FAIR has mounted creative pro-

tests, worked with anti-racist and gay activists to fight bigoted commentators like Bob Grant and Michael Savage, and has time-and-again marshaled organizers to demand more accurate coverage of marches, military actions, and the putative "liberal" bias of the media itself.

"FAIR provided the foundation for the explosion in media reform activism of the past decade," writes media scholar Bob McChesney. "What Voltaire said about God is true about FAIR: If it did not exist, we would have to invent it."

omy, there is only one party, which he dubs “the party of Davos,” after the Swiss ski resort where the rich and powerful gather each January.

Like David Harvey’s recent book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Faux provides a persuasive and revealing framework for understanding globalization in terms of class. It’s a much-needed corrective to the way in which most news about the changing world economy is viewed, usually through a free market fundamentalist or, less frequently, a nationalist lens. But the class war he describes is still remarkably one-sided, despite the emergence of a relatively weak “party of Porto Alegre”—the populist and left movements that began gathering as a counterpoint to Davos.

But Faux does not fully incorporate into his class analysis of globalization either the growing numbers of left-populist presidents in Latin America or even the political opponents of NAFTA-style agreements within the United States (primarily liberal Democrats but also a few right-wing Republicans). Are these minor divisions within the global consensus or expressions of substantial opposition to the ruling elite?

NAFTA is Faux’s prime example of how this global class war works—and how working people in all countries can end up being losers despite the claims of the elite that their trade deals are “win-win” propositions. Continuing the project of Reagan and Bush Sr., Clinton—a key figure in the creation within the

**The Global Class War:
How America’s Bipartisan Elite Lost
Our Future—and What It Will Take
to Win It Back**, By Jeff Faux, John Wiley
& Sons, 292 pages, \$27.95

United States of what Faux calls bipartisan class war—used his political muscle to push through NAFTA first, not the national health plan more important to his constituency. Why? Faux blames the influence of advisors like National Economic Council director and later Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, a former Goldman Sachs executive, as well as the growing dependence of Democrats on corporate money.

He demonstrates how the “bipartisan elite” of Democrats, Republicans, Wall

excerpt



CLASSIFIED: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use it for Social Change

In this recent book from Soft Skull Press, Karen Pittelman and Resource Generation take on the challenge of discussing wealth and social privilege within the activist community.

Most money stories leave out all kinds of important factors. For one, a lot of people already had some kind of privilege in their favor, like male privilege or white privilege or heterosexual privilege, even if they didn’t have class privilege. Often at least one person, if not a whole family’s worth of people, was helping back the story’s hero up and giving them the freedom to “work night and day.” It takes a lot of people to keep a company running or create a product, not just the person in charge who’s reaping most of the profits. And it usually takes a lot of people working at lower wages to keep that profit high. Then there are all the institutional laws and policies that can make the difference between success and failure: tax cuts and subsidies, policies and legislation, connections with banks and investors, labor relations and wages.

If we want to rewrite our money stories to tell the full tale, they’re going to be longer, messier and more complicated. They’ll need to examine questions of privilege, history and luck, not just one individual’s dedication.

Rewriting our money stories doesn’t mean we have to edit out the celebration of hard work and ingenuity. It means inking in the other factors that allow one hard worker to become wealthy while another hard worker struggles on. Telling a new kind of money story can go a long way toward challenging the national belief in the level playing field and underscoring why we need institutional change. It’s one way we can stop justifying the unequal distribution of resources and start helping to challenge it.

Street, multinational executives, the media, and think tanks falsely sold NAFTA to the populations of Canada, Mexico and the United States, and how it ultimately resulted in greater inequality, weakened social programs and reduced living standards for workers in all three countries. NAFTA never delivered the promises of jobs in the United States and reduced illegal migration, and Faux argues that Mexico became more democratic, not because NAFTA succeeded, but because it failed, and protests erupted.

Faux warns that the entire global edifice may come crashing down because of the unsustainable growth of the U.S. trade deficit—maintained so far by the willingness of foreigners to hold dollars—and growing personal, government, and corporate debt. American workers, who have been losing jobs and incomes as the U.S. elite crafted their new world order, are likely to suffer even more when the dollar tanks, and the United States has to start spending less and exporting more.

Counterintuitively, Faux judges that

the best course after such a crash is to embrace the reality of North American economic integration and rebuild a productive continent-wide economy while preserving social safety nets, worker rights and environmental standards and reducing economic inequality.

Faux argues that governments, guided by more democratic citizen initiatives, will have to take the lead to strengthen competitiveness and well-being for citizens of the North American continent. But that would seem to require defeating the bipartisan elite that has been waging class war. If the real problem is the global ruling elite, but a global popular movement to challenge it is not currently a realistic prospect, can a nationalist, or regionalist, response succeed? Faux argues that each of the major regions of the world can craft their own economic strategy, and maybe the United States could even be a model, as the world more slowly and fairly moves towards “human-kind’s ancient dream of one world that works for everyone.” ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

Are Hospitals Hazardous to Your Health?



MARGARET JANNETTI AND David Cohen were victims of a lax and secretive medical system. Both underwent surgery and both died, not on the table, and not from the disease the operation was meant

to correct.

Although they had little in common in life, Jannetti and Cohen shared a cause of death with the estimated 90,000 people who are infected every year by the life-threatening bacteria that cling to clothing, walls, food trays, stethoscopes, catheters and other surfaces in every hospital in the country. But the main culprit is a practice condemned in the 19th century: Hospital personnel going from patient to patient without properly washing their hands.

Cohen, an affluent New York lawyer, was a vigorous 83-year-old when he entered Mount Sinai, a prestigious New York City teaching hospital. (Cohen is a pseudonym at his family's request.) Before laproscopic surgery to remove a colon polyp, he received broad-spectrum antibiotics. While knocking out most of the bacteria in his gut, they created a paradise for potentially fatal *Clostridium difficile* bacteria. Despite a dramatic nationwide increase in *C. diff.* infections—the great majority acquired during hospital stays—Cohen's flourishing infection went undiagnosed and untreated until it was too late. After two months, most of it in a coma, he died of what the hospital called “natural causes.”

Margaret Jannetti, 79, a former piece worker in a Philadelphia garment factory, was the warm center of a large, working-class Italian-American family. Using present tense, Andrew Jannetti affectionately describes his short,

stout mother as a “five-by-five.” After successful heart surgery at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Camden, N.J., Jannetti began a precipitous slide. A month later she was dead. “We didn’t know there was an infection until the day she died,” says Andrew, recalling the doctor’s vague diagnosis of an antibiotic resistant infection. Largely because of antibiotic overuse in humans and livestock, many bacteria have mutated into strains affected by only a select few drugs—or increasingly, none at all. Because her death occurred within 90 days of surgery, Andrew was told it was automatically ascribed to “surgical complications.”

The medical profession, which pledges “First, do no harm,” did harm to Jannetti and Cohen. In addition to 90,000 killed by hospital-acquired infections, some one in 20, or 2 million patients survive but require longer, more expensive stays. In 2002, the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* put the annual U.S. price of *C. diff.* alone at “more than \$1.1 billion in healthcare costs.”

The numbers around hospital infections are all nicely rounded because the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates them; only six states require hospitals to report their rates. And only in Florida can the public meaningfully compare hospitals. Even there, the count is based on billing statistics and “Everybody knows hospitals lie about what is on billing data to get most favorable payment from insurance companies,” says Lisa McGiffert, a senior policy analyst for Consumers Union.

So Americans with no way to check infection rates must bet their lives that their hospital conforms to the safe practice standards set by the CDC.

Believing that the medical system had failed them, Jannetti and Cohen’s children turned to the legal system.

But lawyers are reluctant to sue over

hospital-acquired infections. Since all hospitals are full of sick people and sick people are full of nasty communicable germs, the way to establish that a particular hospital is negligent is to show that it has an unusually high infection rate. It’s like proving that tobacco causes cancer by documenting that smokers disproportionately contract it. No reporting, no statistics. No statistics, no case.

A lawyer would also have to show that the hospital violated its own infection control protocols, but in some states both the protocol and any investigation of lapses are closed—even to a court subpoena. “You can’t determine if hospitals follow their own procedures if you can’t find out what the procedures are,” says Cohen’s son.

In death, Jannetti and Cohen, from very different socioeconomic worlds, had another critical factor in common: Neither’s life was worth a damn, or rather, the cost of a lawsuit that might inspire hospitals to clean up their acts—if not from conscience, at least from concern for the bottom line. Since both the ex-attorney and former factory worker were past their earning years, even a successful suit would garner too little compensation to tempt a trial attorney to take the case.

With hospital-acquired infections epidemic in America and litigation unlikely to spur hospitals to monitor procedures and institute vigilant infection control practices, some activists look to legislation. Spurred by a vigorous campaign by Consumers Union, numerous states are introducing legislation requiring hospitals to track and report infection rates.

“Good reporting is one of our goals,” says McGiffert. “The other is for hospitals to stop infecting people. The first line of defense is wash those hands, clean the stethoscope, clean the food tray, where you know bacteria are living.” ■

classified

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Slavery Syndrome

Continued from back page

"The nature of this work," Leary writes in her prologue, "is such that each group first must see to their own healing, because no group can do another's work."

What kind of reaction have you received to your book? And has that reaction differed based on who is in the audience?

Overall, the response has been very positive, although I'm sure the naysayers are out there. The difference in reaction is noticeable when I deal with grassroots folks in the African-American community. With them, the response has been extremely emotional. It's as though I'm speaking people's personal stories, which seems to give them a feeling of hope.

Of course, I'm not the first person to initiate this kind of work into the intergenerational nature of trauma in the African-American community ... What I did differently is that I pulled from many different historical sources and scholarly disciplines. In essence, I created a "map" of knowledge so that people could see how African-American self-perception has been shaped.

Throughout your book, you emphasize that an acute, social denial of both historical and present-day racism has taken on pathological dimensions. You write that this country is "sick with the issue of race."

The root of this denial for the dominant culture is fear, and fear mutates into all kinds of things: psychological projection, distorted and sensationalized representations in the media, and the manipulation of science to justify the legal rights and treatment of people. That's why it's become so hard to unravel.

Unfortunately, many European Americans have a very hard time even hearing a person of color express their experiences. The prevailing psychological mechanism is the idea, "I've not experienced it, so it cannot be happening for you."

Truly, how can anyone tell me what I have and have not experienced? This is a very paternalistic manifestation of white supremacy, the idea that African Americans and other people of color can be told, with great authority, what their ancestor's

lives were like and even what their own, present-day lives are like. The result for those on the receiving end of this kind of distortion is an aspect of PTSS. People begin to doubt themselves, their experiences, and their worth in society because they have been so invalidated their whole lives, in so many ways.

Attempts to encourage European Americans to join in on a more honest, national dialogue about "race" and racism often results in defensive posturing and positioning. Common responses include "slavery happened a long time ago," or people saying that they're tired of being made to feel guilty about something they didn't do. How do we respond to this detachment from the crucial issues of the legacy of slavery?

It's irrelevant that you weren't alive during slavery days. I wasn't there either! But what we as a nation face today has been heavily impacted by our history, whether we're talking in the gulf between the haves and have-nots; education gaps between white and black children; or the racial disparities in our prisons.

I don't believe in making people feel "guilty." We have to recognize that remnants of racist oppression continue to impact people in this country.

Much of my work really is about black people looking at ourselves and understanding how our lives have been shaped by what we've been dealt. I don't want to wait for permission to examine this or to hear that looking back into our histories is somehow counterproductive.

An eye-opening experience for you was your first visit to New York's largest and most overpopulated jail facility, Rikers Island. What kinds of insights did you gain about PTSS from talking to imprisoned African-American young men about their lives?

It was remarkable to see their physical disposition. They walked into the room with their heads held low, shuffled in ... for lack of a better word, [they looked like] slaves. They had lost their way, and there was no light in their eyes whatsoever. Young people typically have a high level of energy. While there was a feeling of angry rebelliousness, the prevailing feeling of hopelessness was staggering.

It's also significant that it took about a

half-hour for them to realize that I was talking to them, not at them. In that brief moment, I felt as though I gave them hope. Their body language had already changed by the time they were getting ready to leave. They had become students by the end of our time together.

These young people are being raised by these institutions, and then unleashed back into their communities to wreak havoc. Most of these young men grew up in poverty, and they have the experience of being black and poor in a materialistic society that says if you have nothing, you are nothing. In comparison, when I was in Africa I witnessed incredible poverty unlike anything I had ever seen before. I always talk about how tall and proud the people walked. Their greatest shame was their lack of education, not their lack of wealth. But in America, you are what you have, what you wear.

You write about the fear that many African Americans have of being "exposed" or having family or community "dirty laundry" aired. "Never let them see you sweat," as the expression goes.

Shame is such a big issue in our society in general. What many African Americans have internalized is a sense of shame about just not being "good enough." That's a horrible thing to be sentenced to for your life.

When a person walks around with that sense of shame and self-hatred, they are likely to function poorly in society, no matter who they are. Add the extra layer of racist socialization, of being devalued, and what it means to be just human in America, and all those things just makes the shame worse. We as African Americans don't get a pass on all the problems that humans have to deal with in life: finances, career choices, personal crises, relationships, and so forth. But when we add that to this intergenerational trauma in the context of a society that is in denial about its racism, people's lives can become overwhelmed, even frozen in place.

I'm saying let's just take a few of those burdens off of people's shoulders. Look at what we, as African Americans, have been able to do even with those burdens on our shoulders. Can you imagine what we could accomplish if some of those burdens were removed? ■



POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME

Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary talks about her provocative new book

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

RACISM ERODES OUR VERY HUMANITY. No one can be truly liberated while living under the weight of oppression, argues Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary in her new book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (<http://www.posttraumaticslavesyndrome.com>).

Leary, who teaches social work at Portland State University, traces the way that both overt and subtle forms of racism have damaged the collective African-American psyche—harm manifested through poor mental and physical health, family and relationship dysfunction, and self-destructive impulses.

Leary adapts our understanding of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to propose that African Americans today suffer from a particular kind of intergenerational trauma: Post Traumatic

Slave Syndrome (PTSS).

The systematic dehumanization of African slaves was the initial trauma, explains Leary, and generations of their descendants have borne the scars. Since that time, Americans of all ethnic backgrounds have been inculcated and immersed in a fabricated (but effective) system of race “hierarchy,” where light-skin privilege still dramatically affects the likelihood of succeeding in American society.

Leary suggests that African Americans (and other people of color) can ill afford to wait for the dominant culture to realize the qualitative benefits of undoing racism. The real recovery from the ongoing trauma of slavery and racism has to start from within, she says, beginning with a true acknowledgment of the resilience of African-American culture.

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